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SERMONS
AND
DISCOURSES
ON THE
Following SUBJECTS,
VIZ.

On the Errors and Imperfections of Chriſtians.

On the Nature of Chriſt's Kingdom.

The Duty and Advantages of Secret Prayer.

Two Eſſays on Prayer.

On the Nature and Deſign of the Lord's-Supper.

On the Obligation of the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity to celebrate the Lord's-Supper.

Devotional Exerciſes relating to the Lord's-Supper.

The Regulation of Diverſions.

By the Reverend Mr. HENRY GROVE,
of TAUNTON.

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THE

THE

Friendly Monitor;

OR THREE

SERMONS,

Pointing out Some of thoſe

Errors and Imperfections

IN THE

CONDUCT

OF

CHRISTIANS,

By which they leſſen both

THEIR OWN REPUTATION

And THAT of

RELIGION.

1728.

THE

PREFACE.

NEXT *to the* knowledge of God in Chriſt, *the* knowledge *moſt deſirable, and of the higheſt importance to us, is the* knowledge of ourſelves. *Neither of theſe without the other can be complete, or ſerve any valuable purpoſe. The ground of which inſeparable connection between the* knowledge *of God, and of man, are thoſe neceſſary relations which the* Beings *themſelves have one to the other. For how can we act conformably to theſe relations, if we have not firſt a good underſtanding of our own nature, and of the nature and will of our great Creator?*

The knowledge *which every man is concerned to get of* himſelf, *is either more* general, *or* particular. *The* general knowledge *of a man's ſelf, is attained by the conſideration of thoſe things in which all men agree, without the leaſt diſtinction betwixt them; ſuch as the dignity of the human nature in its primitive ſtate, the corruption of it by ſin, the hopeleſs ſtate of guilt and impotence in which we lie, without the Grace of God juſtifying, and ſanctifying us. This* knowledge *is of abſolute neceſſity. The other* knowledge of ourſelves, *which is more* particular *and* private, *conſiſts in an intimate acquaintance with our own diſtinguiſhing character, our ſtate and condition in a religious capacity, our prevailing inclinations, our attainments and defects, what there is commendable in us, and worthy to be cheriſhed, and what that is otherwiſe. Now tho' we cannot ſay of this* knowledge, *as of the former, that it is eſſentially neceſſary, yet we may ſay, that it is apparently uſeful, how apt ſoever one might be to conclude the contrary from its being ſo generally neglected.*

Who that loves *himſelf, in the* right manner, *would not willingly* correct *every thing that needs correction in his notions, or temper, or conduct? And* improve *whatever deſerves, and is capable of improvement? Were it only on this reflection, that the greater his* ſpiritual perfection *is, the greater will be his ſelf-*

enjoy-

enjoyment; and the fewer his ſlips and frailties, the fewer will be his diſguſts, and the leſs occaſion he will have to blame and condemn himſelf? And when to this argument of ſelf-love, *we further add that which is drawn from the* love of God, *and* our neighbour, *how obſervant ſhould we be of our behaviour; how careful to remark, and how ready to mend, the leaſt errors, tho' they are but as* motes in the eye, *that may render us leſs capable of glorifying the one, and edifying the other. When we attend to theſe things, we ſhall think it a little ſurprizing, that, with regard to a great many* Chriſtians, *as long as they keep themſelves from eſſential errors, and groſs faults, it is the leaſt part of their care, how they ſhall reform the defects of their temper, and model their converſation ſo, as to conquer the prejudices, and gain the favourable opinion of thoſe, who are ſtrangers, and enemies to ſerious* Religion. *By this means, it often happens, that the infirmities and follies of the* Man *very much obſcure the graces of the* Chriſtian, *and weaken their influence.*

A great part of the following Sermons, *tho' not compoſed for ſuch an occaſion, nor, as ſome will be apt to think, very well fited to it, was preached at* Lyme *in* Dorſetſhire, April 23. 1728, *before an Aſſembly of Miniſters; the Perſon, who was to have performed that part, having failed them. They were ſo well pleaſed with the ſubject, as not only to excuſe*

the defects of the Sermon, *but to join in a requeſt that it might be made more publick; adding this reaſon for it, which I own is one of the ſtrongeſt they could have uſed with me,* " *that ſuch a* Diſcourſe *was needed, and might* " *be of ſome ſervice.*"

I am very ſenſible it is an ungrateful work I have here undertaken. But if any find themſelves touched, I hope they will conſider the goodneſs of my intention, and, for the ſake of that, pardon the liberty I have uſed. I have endeavoured to handle each caſe with all the tenderneſs *conſiſtent with plain dealing; nor is it, God knows, to upbraid any, that I ſhew them their* imperfections; *or from a fond conceit of my being without fault myſelf; but out of a ſincere regard to* Religion, *which I ſhould be glad to ſee appear with greater advantage in the lives of good men. That the* Sermons *here offered to the publick may contribute to this important end, the Author commends them to the divine bleſſing; and intreats thoſe, into whoſe hands they ſhall come, laying aſide all prejudice, to read them with a reſolution of making them as uſeful to themſelves as they can.*

SERMON I.

On the Errors and Imperfections of Chriſtians.

ROM. XIV. 16.

Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of:

SO difficult a thing is it to perſuade people to change old cuſtoms, tho' for much better, that of the *Jews*, who embraced *Chriſtianity*, the greater part, like the ſervant that loved his maſter, and would not go out free, were not very willing to accept of the the liberty offered them by the Goſpel, from the heavy yoke of ceremonial inſtitu-

tions. It required ſome time to wean them from their prejudices in favour of the Religion they had been bred up in; by which means it came to paſs, that in the Chriſtian Church (which conſiſted of converts of all ſorts, from *Heatheniſm*, and *Judaiſm*, of ſtronger, and of weaker, judgments) there was, from the firſt plantation of it, a diverſity of opinions and uſages; ſome adhering to the diſtinction which the law had made between meats and days; others paying no manner of regard to it, as rightly apprehending it to be aboliſhed by Chriſt. So the *Apoſtle* obſerves in the begining of this Chapter, that while *One believeth he may eat all things*; *another who is weak, eateth herbs*; that is, he will take up with a dinner of herbs, rather than touch any kind of food, forbiden by the law. *One man eſteemeth one day above another*; *another eſteemeth every day alike.* ver. 2 and 5. In this difference of ſentiments, the duty of the contending parties lay in two things; *Firſt*, in forbearing all raſh and uncharitable reflections upon each other; and *Secondly*, in following after the things wherewith they might one edify another. They were not only to conſider things in their intrinſic nature, but in their circumſtances; and to conſult the intereſt of ſouls, and of Religion. See the 3d, the 13th and 19th verſes. This latter part of the advice did more particularly concern ſuch as, having juſt

juſt notions of Chriſtian Liberty, laboured not under thoſe miſtakes and ſcruples which perplexed and entangled others. They knew that *all things are lawful*, which were ſo before the law of ceremonies made them otherwiſe; but ought not to forget, that *all things are not expedient*. They were not to abuſe their liberty by an unſeaſonable oſtentation of it, to the hurt and offence of their chriſtian brother. *Deſtroy not him with thy meat for whom Chriſt died.* ver. 15. Do not be the occaſion of another man's turning apoſtate to Chriſtianity, or acting againſt his conſcience, rather than deny thyſelf in ſo ſmall a matter; reconcile him by *arguments*, if thou art able, to thy innocent freedoms; but if thy *arguments* convince him not, let not thy *example* be a ſtumbling-block to him; either by tempting him to do what in his conſcience he believes not to be lawful; or by provoking him, out of ſpite and reſentment at thy behaviour, to forſake, or ſtand more looſe and indifferent to, the profeſſion of that Religion, which, you ſay, gives you thoſe offenſive indulgences. After which it follows, *Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of.* It is good that every man ſhould be acquainted with *the liberty, wherewith Chriſt hath made him free, and that he ſhould ſtand faſt in this liberty*; but then, let him endeavour ſo to order his converſation and behaviour, as not to prejudice the common cauſe, and to give any

any handle for ſpeaking evil of a thing, which, rightly uſed, is very good. This is the connection and meaning of the Text. But without confining myſelf to this particular caſe, I ſhall, in diſcourſing on theſe words, make them as generally inſtructive as I am able, and to this end, lay down the following Doctrine.

It is the duty of all profeſſing Chriſtianity to be exceeding careful that what is good in itſelf do not, through ſome fault of theirs, paſs under an ill name.

By *good* we are chiefly to underſtand that which is of a *moral* and *ſpiritual* kind; not merely *deſirable*, which we call *natural good*, but *laudable*, and ſuch as renders a perſon worthy of reſpect and commendation; the *good* of *virtue*, of *grace*, and *holineſs*; the *good* that conſiſts in the conformity of the temper, or actions and behaviour, to the law of Reaſon, and the rules of the Goſpel, to the divine nature, and the human.

In handling this ſubject, I ſhall, *Firſt*, ſomewhat largely open, and explain the Doctrine; and then, *Secondly*, prove and enforce it by ſome proper conſiderations.

I. I ſhall open the Doctrine under theſe two heads, *namely*, as the duty relates to Chriſtians in general; and as it more particularly affects thoſe that *love the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity*.

1. I ſhall

1. I ſhall conſider the advice, as it reſpects indifferently all the profeſſors of the Goſpel. And very neceſſary it is for all to be cautioned againſt furniſhing occaſion for *their good to be evil ſpoken of.* Give me leave to inſtance in ſome particulars.

1. *Chriſtianity* is undoubtedly a very good thing; and a very good thing it is to make a publick profeſſion of it; and yet, if Chriſtians do not take care to live according to their Religion, they muſt expect, that both that, and their profeſſion of it too, will be *evil ſpoken of*; the former unjuſtly, the latter with too much reaſon. From the very begining there were thoſe who diſgraced the *Chriſtian Name*, by ſheltering their corruptions and immoralities under it. Whence proceeded ſuch complaints as theſe. [a] *Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the croſs of Chriſt.* [b] *Many ſhall follow their pernicious ways, by reaſon of whom the way of truth ſhall be evil ſpoken of.* This, no doubt, did very much retard the progreſs of the Goſpel, which, tho' in thoſe times it was really wonderful, would have been more remarkable ſtill, if they that came over to it had, with their old *errors*, more univerſally forſaken their old *vices* too. Chriſtianity is too ſtrict, too pure and divine a Religon, to be with-

[a] Phil. iii. 18. [b] 2 Pet. ii. 2.

without enemies in such a world as this. While Christianity declares open war against the lusts and passions of men, these lusts will, in revenge, put them on observing whatever may be to the disadvantage of Christianity, and seems to justify them in their opposition to it; particularly, the wicked lives of all who call themselves Christians, and are not. "These, (will they say) are saints of "the earth; the generation that are pure in "their own eyes; see the boasted efficacy "of their Religion! They tell us of strange "things accomplished by it; how it raises "human nature, and transforms men into "angels; but if they can produce no better "proofs of it than the effects it hath in "them, we must be excused if we think "their Religion to be as human, or rather, "to be as much a cheat and an imposture, as "any of those Religions which they so se-"verely condemn."

Justin Martyr *, one of the first *Apologists* for Christianity, found himself obliged to take notice of the same objection. "They, "among us, that live not as they should, may "have exposed the whole body of Christians "to reproach; but (adds he) very unreason-"ably, since you must be sensible that some "who take the name and habit of Philo-"sophers, do nothing that is worthy of their "profession; either, therefore, the objection "holds

* *Apol.* 1.

" holds againſt Chriſtianity and Philoſophy " both, or againſt neither." But tho' it be very unreaſonable to make mens *perſonal* characters, how bad ſoever, an objection againſt their Religion, yet it is ſuch an objection as nothing will effectually ſilence but greater care, in the profeſſors of the Goſpel, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. And this is one principal cauſe why Chriſtians, who live in heathen countries, or intermingled with heathens, can do no more good upon them by all their diſputes, and diſcourſes, finding them invincibly ſet againſt a change of their Religion on this very account *. For to what purpoſe ſhould they embrace a *new* Religon, and continue the *ſame* men? If they do not grow worſe. Indeed, as in this Nation the Chriſtian Religion is eſtabliſhed, and few openly profeſs to diſbelieve it, there may not ſeem to be the like danger from the corruptions of Chriſtians to the cauſe of Chriſtianity itſelf: but then, if we conſider the *ſceptical* humour that prevails among us, and that nothing promotes it more than the little influence which Chriſtianity hath upon the lives and tempers of men, we ſhall acknowledge it to be every one's concern, who wiſhes well to his Religion, to be more watchful over his conduct. But, alas, what reaſon can we have to hope, that

* *Perry*'s account of *Muſcovy*, and the account of the ſucceſs of the *Daniſh* Miſſionaries.

that men, who will not be detered from a ſinful courſe by conſiderations of their own guilt and danger, will be much moved by arguments taken from the credit of Religion! It is, however, fit that ſuch perſons ſhould be told that what Religion loſes of its eſteem by the diſhonour they do it, ſhall be charged to their account; and that together with the credit of Religion they forfeit their own much more; and cannot wonder if the pretences they make to Religion are treated with contempt and ridicule. A *wicked man* is a diſhonourable character, but a *wicked profeſſor* is much worſe; nor muſt they think to maintain their reputation in the world, who do ſo much to ſink the reputation of their moſt holy faith. As the ſin of [c] *Eli*'s ſons *was great* in that *they cauſed men to abhor the offering of the Lord*, ſo through the juſt judgment of God it fell heavy on themſelves; for *them that honour him, God will honour, but they that deſpiſe him ſhall be lightly eſteemed.*

2. *Zeal* for that which is good, is a good thing, and yet is many times in danger of being *evil ſpoken of*; particularly, if it be an *ignorant* zeal, or not *impartial* and *uniform.* To be zealouſly affected for a thing, and hardly know *why*, or *for what*; to eſpouſe a good cauſe, but without good reaſon; (which is not only very poſſible, but very common) and be able to ſay no more for the *truth*, than

[c] 1 Sam. ii. 17, 30.

than the deluded people did for their *idol*, when they [d] *cried out with one voice for the ſpace of two hours together---Great is Diana of the Epheſians*---to be led by ſuch an ignorant zeal is the ready way to expoſe the beſt cauſe in the world; for if the cauſe be judged of by the imperfections of the perſons embarked in it, (which is the uſual method of proceeding) the truth itſelf will unavoidably ſuffer in ſuch hands, and be reckoned deſtitute of all arguments to ſupport it, becauſe they that are warmeſt for it are able to produce none. Or, if it ſhould ſo happen that the cauſe is never the worſe ſpoken of for our ignorance, yet our zeal will; which every one will be ready to attribute to pride, or paſſion, or intereſt, or party-prejudice, or hazard; and to conclude, would have been the ſame, if education or accident had thrown us on the other ſide; by which means, the benefit of the example, which our zeal might otherwiſe have afforded, will be loſt; and which is worſe, zeal ſhall come to be regarded as no virtue, but made a term of reproach; as the word *Orthodoxy* hath been from much the ſame cauſe. We ſhould therefore acquaint ourſelves with the goodneſs of thoſe things for which we expreſs a zeal; that if they are excellent, we may diſcern their excellency: we ſhould yield God and Religion a *reaſonable ſervice*, and have ſome

[d] Acts xix. 34.

ſome juſt and ſufficient ground for prefering one opinion and way to another. And as our zeal, though for that which is good, will paſs under an ill name, if it be joined with ignorance, ſo will it too, if it be not *impartial* and *uniform*. A zeal that is reſtrained to ſome things, and overlooks others, which are of equal, or greater, goodneſs and neceſſity, will never gain us much reputation.

Thus ſome, who contend earneſtly for the *truth*, ſhall have no concern at all for *peace* and *purity*, for *liberty* and *charity*. Their behaviour is turbulent, pragmatical, and contentious, their converſation looſe and ſcandalous, their principles narrow and rigid, and their temper fited for perſecution, if the name was not become ſo odious. Others, again, are mighty *advocates* for chriſtian *liberty* and *charity*, and as great *ſtrangers* to chriſtian *holineſs*. They liſt themſelves on the ſide of liberty and charity, not ſo much out of love to theſe things, as indifference to the truth, or their being ſecretly of opinions contrary to thoſe that are received. *Gallio*'s notion of the quarrel between the *Jews* and the Apoſtle *Paul*, that it was only [e] *a queſtion of words and names*, is too much theirs in regard of the moſt momentous articles of Religion; and therefore, like him, they care for none of theſe things. Chriſtianity is a conſiſtent frame of doctrines and precepts; and

[e] Acts xviii. 15, 17.

and being so, we should endeavour to maintain the like constancy in our zeal for the several parts of it; not sacrificing some to others, and breaking one command for the sake of keeping another. It is, I confess, no easy matter to preserve the *golden mean* in *religious disputes*, and to hold the ballance so evenly betwixt truth on one hand, and peace and charity on the other, as to give all of them their due; but, difficult as this is, it is not impossible to those who are under the direction of the *Father of lights*, whose illuminations, in a dilligent and unbiassed application to the means of knowledge and wisdom, they piously and constantly implore; and are acted by a spirit of sincerity, humility, and love, which they industriously cherish, and faithfully follow. Such as these *God will guide in judgement*, not only leading them into the knowledge of all necessary truth, but into the most proper methods of defending it. Which is a privilege they must not expect, who imitate a certain Bigot that I have read of. Being pressed by his adversary, and not able to answer his arguments, he promised to inquire after the truth with more care than he had done; but having beged of God to open his eyes, and discover the right way to him, he was, upon this single address, and without taking any further pains, filled with such an overflowing light and joy, as to determine

with himſelf, that he would never quit his former opinion. Worthy inquirers after truth, ſaith one, to think that God vouchſafes ſuch large meaſures of his Spirit, in anſwer to a ſingle prayer, as to qualify men to judge in the moſt difficult and important points without all danger of miſtake!

3. The outward practice and appearance of any duty or grace is ſo far good; but, if attended with a manifeſt neglect of other eſſential duties, will certainly fall under cenſure. And can we think of no inſtances of this kind? Perſons that make great pretenſions to piety, but come miſerably ſhort in point of juſtice, and temperance? Or maintain a fair character, as to one, or both, of theſe latter, but appear to be utterly void of a ſpirit of piety? What ſhall we call the piety of the one ſort, and the juſtice, and ſobriety of the other? What is the former better than hypocriſy? Or the latter than worldly policy, common prudence, or a happineſs of temper? The *Phariſees*, according to St. *Paul*'s account of them, were the *ſtricteſt ſect*[f] of the *Jewiſh* Religion; they prayed long and often, and put on a ſhew of more than ordinary ſanctity and mortification, inſomuch that the common people were impoſed upon by their diſſimulation, and had as good an opinion of them, if that were poſſible, as they had of themſelves. And

[f] Acts xxvi. 5.

And yet our Lord more than once joins *Phariſee* and *hypocrite* together, as if on one ſide they were terms equivalent, and every *Phariſee*, almoſt, was a *hypocrite*, though not every *hypocrite* a *Phariſee*. The reaſon was, that their extraordinary devotion was merely a cover to their cruelty, their oppreſſion, and injuſtice. And very probably, the honeſter and wiſer part of the *Jews* had much the ſame notion of theſe men as our Saviour had, and knew how to diſtinguiſh what was only paint, and that none of the beſt, from real life. And it is not altogether unlikely that, as the ſect of the *Sadducees* was directly oppoſite to that of the *Phariſees*, (one of them being as openly looſe both in principles and practice as the other was profeſſedly ſtrict in both) ſo it owed its growth very much to it. The *Phariſees* were *hypocrites*, the *Sadducees libertines*; and what more common than for libertiniſm to be promoted and propagated by hypocriſy? The thing hath been uſual, and is perfectly natural. Hopocriſy is ſuch an odious thing, eſpecially in Religion, that men fancy they can never get at too great a diſtance from it, and ſo, to avoid one extreme, run into another; and are, perhaps, ſecretly pleaſed to have ſo plauſible an excuſe for their contempt of *the form of godlineſs*.

If therefore we would have the world look on our piety as ſincere and genuine, and with our own credit, would recover that of

Religion, and the duties of it, let us not wear our Religion only as people do their beſt clothes, on particular times and occaſions; but bring it into our ordinary conduct, and make it the governing principle of our actions; let this animate and direct our converſation as the ſoul doth the body; with the duties of the *firſt table* let us join thoſe of the *ſecond*, and admit the moral virtues, if in no other quality, yet, as ſervants to wait on Religion, and fill up its train. The *Jews* were apt to lay ſuch a ſtreſs on ſacrificing as to think, however impure they were in their moral converſation, it was but to offer ſacrifice and they ſhould be clean; in oppoſition to which conceit of theirs it ſeems to be, that *Solomon* obſerves, [g] *by mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* And the *Prophet*, in anſwer to the queſtion, [h] *wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old?* &c. ſaith no more than this, *he hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*

The ſame men attributed a ſtrange virtue to ſaying many prayers, as if for every prayer they ſhould have a certain number of ſins ſtruck off from the guilty ſcore; wherein, they

[g] Prov. xvi. 6. [h] Micah vi. 6,—8.

they have a great many followers among the profeſſors of Chriſtianity. Such will do well to read and conſider thoſe words of the prophet, [i] *When ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Waſh ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well,* &c. *Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord, though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool.* On the other hand, let not thoſe who, not ſeting up for the character of godly perſons, are free from the charge of religious craft, and diſſimulation, boaſt too much of their moral virtues. They affect to be thought ſtricly juſt; and poſſibly, are ſo in their worldly trade and buſineſs; but are they *temperate in all things?* Perhaps they are both juſt and temperate; but ſhall we therefore praiſe them, and number them among the truly virtuous? We praiſe them not. As long as they are irreligious, it is not poſſible they ſhould be ſincerely virtuous; the outſide of ſome virtues they may practiſe, but as to the ſubſtantial, vital part, are as entirely deſtitute of them, as they are of Religion and Piety. They practiſe no one virtue in obedience to the command of God, for then they would

[i] Iſai. i. 15,—18.

practiſe all; and wanting the fear, and love of God, they want the eſſential principle of all virtue, and the only thing that can preſerve it in all aſſaults. Let the men of this denomination further reflect, that the perſons, before mentioned, who attempt to divide *piety* from *morality*, have not done the cauſe of *piety* a greater injury, than they by their naked, lifeleſs form of virtue, have done to *morality*; ſo that while *piety*, in their account, is only the dreſs of a *Phariſee*, *morality*, in return, is reckoned by others the accompliſhment of a pagan; *grace* is ſuppoſed to be an enemy to *morality*, and *morality* to *grace*; though there be the ſtricteſt, and moſt inſeparable, alliance between them; great numbers of combatants draw up on both ſides, and ingage with ſo much fierceneſs, as to give opportunity for a third ſort to ſtep in, that are equal enemies to Religion and Virtue, and deſtroy the foundations of both, by reſolving them into opinion and cuſtom, or intereſt and deſign.

4. It is good for every one to rely on Jeſus Chriſt for ſalvation, the ſcripture having told us, that [k] *there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be ſaved.* But then this reliance muſt be in a way of *holineſs* and *obedience*; or will neither be an honour to Chriſt, nor of any advantage to ourſelves. And how deplorable

[k] Acts iv. 12.

plorable then is it, that this presumptuous trust in Christ should be as common as a well-regulated trust is rare? Under a pretence of vindicating the doctrine of *free grace*, some have learned to discard *good works*. That *faith* justifies without *works*, is an opinion espoused by many good men, who, at the same time, have acknowledged that there is no being saved without them; on which account, we ought to make a wide difference between them and some loose Christians, who, that they may have peace, notwithstanding they go on in their evil ways, encourage themselves in the *merits* of Christ, and the *grace* of the Gospel; and venture to run the hazard of, what is called, a *death-bed repentance*, that is, of making their peace with God, by imploring his mercy, and commiting themselves to the protection of their Saviour, with their last breath.

I shall not enter into any dispute with the former, but only desire them to consider, whether saying as they do, that the covenant of *grace* is *unconditional*, and *good works* are excluded not only as *meritorious* of justification, but, as having any influence at all towards it, hath not been the unhappy means of hardening some in their wicked courses; and whether, therefore, they ought to be so very fond of their scheme, in case there be any other which equally consults the honour of God's *grace*, without being liable to the

ſame abuſe. To the latter, I ſhall not ſcruple to ſay, that no perſons in the world reproach Chriſt, and faith in him, more than they do. They repreſent him as *a friend to publicans and ſinners*, in much the ſame ſenſe as the *Phariſees* accuſed him of being ſo; as if he delighted in ſuch company, and had no zeal for the honour of God, and his law. There would be too much foundation for ſuch a charge as this againſt our bleſſed Maſter, if there was any for that dependence which ſome have on the *merits* of Chriſt, who live in open contempt and violation of the commands of the Goſpel. Suppoſing ſuch men as theſe to have any real ground for their hopes, it muſt be ſaid, that Chriſt is a friend of ſinners, not becauſe *he came to call them to repentance*, (in which ſenſe he freely owns himſelf their friend) but even as ſinners, whom he is willing to ſave *without* repentance; or upon ſuch a repentance as is next to none. Whether they conſider it or no, this is the plain language of their reliance on Chriſt in an unregenerate ſtate. Our Saviour's words to the *Jews*, [1] *Do not think that I will accuſe you to the Father; there is one that accuſeth you, even Moſes, in whom ye truſt: for had ye believed Moſes, ye would have believed me.* Theſe words, I ſay, are with a little variation very applicable here. We need not accuſe you to God, there is one that accuſeth

[1] John v. 45, 46.

cuſeth you, even Chriſt, in whom ye truſt. You cannot truſt more to your being the diſciples of Chriſt, than the *Jews* did to their being the diſciples of *Moſes*, and yet their boaſted zeal for the law of *Moſes* would not juſtify them; nay, nor ſo much as prove that they truly believed in him. There is no doubt, but they believed the law of *Moſes* to be divine; and why then does Chriſt upbraid them with the want of faith? The reaſon is, that not having a right notion of the law of *Moſes*, which was intended as *a ſchool-maſter to lead them unto Chriſt*, their faith was to all intents and purpoſes the ſame as no faith; which makes our Lord ſay, *Had ye believed Moſes, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.* In like manner, we may addreſs ourſelves to thoſe who glory in Chriſt Jeſus, and talk much of their *faith* in him, while they take no care to keep his commandments, whatever you fancy, you do not believe in Chriſt, for if ye believed Chriſt, you would believe the neceſſity of a holy life, which his Goſpel aſſerts, and inſiſts upon, in ſo many places. What you call *your faith*, therefore, *is vain, and you are yet in your ſins*,

I make no queſtion but a great many have entertained diſhonourable thoughts of the doctrines of *free grace*, and *juſtification by faith*, and of the *Chriſtian Revelation* which teaches theſe doctrines, becauſe of the ill

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uſe that is made of them by multitudes profeſſing the Goſpel. They take it for granted that the doctrine of Chriſt's *ſatisfaction* for ſin overthrows the neceſſity of holineſs, and therefore reject it; as it is certain, they would have too much cauſe to do, was this its natural tendency; which is ſo far from being true, that there cannot be a more perſuaſive argument for our forſaking all ſin, than that Chriſt, the Son of God ſhed his blood to expiate it. It is impoſſible, indeed, but *offences will come, but woe unto thoſe men by whom the offence cometh.* And need I point them out? Muſt not the conſcience of every wilful ſinner, of every one that indulges his luſts, and yet will needs place confidence in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, tell him roundly, *Thou alſo art one of them?* It is owing to thee, and others like thee, that the Goſpel hath ſuffered ſuch contumelious uſage.

I ſhall ſay no more of the ſeveral ways by which Chriſtians, indifferently, may offend againſt the precept in the Text, but ſhall proceed,

11. To explain this duty, of behaving ſo that *our good be not evil ſpoken of*, as it particularly affects real Chriſtians, or thoſe that *love the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity.* All ſuch are truly religious; this is eſſential to their character; and we know, that *pure undefiled*

undefiled religion before God is a good thing, the very beſt thing in the whole world. I am not now ſpeaking of Religion as we find it in the Bible, where it ſhines, like the ſun in the heavens, with an everlaſting brightneſs, but as inwrought into the heart and ſoul. And here, Religion is an aſſemblage, or ſociety of graces; lovely, if taken apart, moſt lovely and attractive conſidered in union. Religion is a conformity to the divine nature, an imitation of God in his moral perfections; that is, of the moſt amiable attributes of the moſt amiable and glorious Being. It was the happineſs of man, in his firſt and beſt eſtate, that he was created in the likeneſs of God, and conſequently, it muſt be a ſingular felicity to have this image or likeneſs reſtored, as it is in all the regenerate, though not in that perfection as it will be hereafter. The life of God in the ſoul, a vigorous principle of divine love, a rooted confirmed habit of holineſs, an unaffected piety and goodneſs, an inclination to univerſal righteouſneſs, a heavenly converſation; theſe are ſuch things as no one will offer to ſpeak againſt *directly*; the worſt and moſt abandoned part of mankind would be aſhamed to vent their hatred and ſpite in reproaches againſt theſe things themſelves; and yet, they will with the greateſt freedom inveigh againſt the perſons in whom they are found. What the ſcripture

ture calls *converſion*, *regeneration*, *grace*, *ſanctification*, *religion*, and the like, they call, almoſt whereſoever they ſee it, folly, paſſion, ill-nature, hypocriſy, enthuſiaſm, ſuperſtition, pride, moroſeneſs, and by a great many other ſuch reproachful names. And how comes Religion to be thus evil ſpoken of? Is the *beſt* of things to ſuffer under ſome of the *worſt* of names; eſpecially when it hath a witneſs in every man's breaſt? We ſhall not miſtake, if we ſay, that the root of this is *the enmity of the carnal mind againſt God*; which, becauſe it dares not aim immediately at God himſelf, diſplays its rancour in perſecuting his image, by *actions*, if they are in its power; if not, by opprobrious *words*. But then I muſt add, that good men themſelves do too often afford a handle for this treatment, which would otherwiſe be ſo apparently the effect of envy and malice, that ill men would not ſo very often be guilty of it.

There are ſome, who we have reaſon to think are in the main upright, well-meaning Chriſtians, that labour under conſiderable imperfections, which, tho' they do not make them forfeit their covenant-relation to God, and intereſt in him, have yet a moſt unhappy influence upon their character in the world. Theſe the enemies of godlineſs gladly ſeize upon, and immediately to work they go, and make the moſt of them they poſſibly can,

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aggravating every ſlip, expoſing every weakneſs, magnifying every defect, while they continue wilfully blind to thoſe virtues which are intermingled with their blemiſhes, and with a good-natured and equitable judge, would compenſate for them all. As a bad man is a ſpot in a publick ſociety of Chriſtians, ſo there are certain qualities and imperfections which are ſpots in the true Chriſtian, and do very much ſtain, or hide, the beauty of his character. I ſhall reduce them under theſe four general heads---Some things that ſavour a little too much of Superſtition and Enthuſiaſm----Indiſcretions---Blemiſhes of a moral kind in their private conduct---and laſtly, Defects in the ſocial virtues.

1. There are ſometimes found in good men certain things, which ſavour too much of *Superſtition* and *Enthuſiaſm.* Theſe ſpread ſuch a cloud over their Religion, that the brightneſs of it cannot appear. Their friends, who have any thing of judgment and reflection, pity them for theſe weakneſſes, and are heartily grieved for the prejudice they do the cauſe of Religion; while their enemies deſpiſe them, and their Religion too, and, having ſuch an advantage given them, inſult both in the moſt ſcornful manner. When Superſtition is mixed with Religion, the almoſt unavoidable conſequence is, that Religion ſhall be accounted, or at leaſt treated, as Superſtition. Whatever

ever diſcovers a belief of God, and of ſuperior inviſible beings, but dark, and confuſed, and joined with abſurd, extravagant, and ridiculous obſervances, altogether unworthy of God, unſuitable to his worſhip, and unbecoming that truſt which we ought to repoſe in him, I call *Superſtition.* Tho' real Chriſtians (among us at leaſt) can hardly fall into ſuch groſs Superſtitions as gave begining to *Atheiſm* and *Mahometiſm*, yet there are leſſer inſtances of the ſame temper, to which they are ſubject, and that have a bad effect on Religion, tho' not ſo bad as the former. Such as theſe following.

1. Having recourſe to ſpells, and charms, and divinations, for the cure of bodily diſeaſes, the diſcovery of things loſt, or future; paying a mighty regard to omens; the obſerſervation of lucky, and unlucky days, and places, and the like. Superſtition hath been the fruitful mother of many ſuch idle practices, which Chriſtians, for the credit of their Religion, not to ſay of their own underſtandings, ſhould carefully avoid. All theſe things are among the relicks of Popery; we received them from the *Papiſts*, and they from the *Heathens*; ſo that if we trace them up to the begining, we ſhall find that, on the father's ſide, the devil was the parent and inventor of them; and that theſe were ſome of the arts of his government, by which he kept mankind in bondage, ſtifled

led all ſober rational ſenſe of Religion, and led the deluded world in chains of ignorance to their own perdition. And therefore, was there no other argument that lay againſt them, yet for the *Author*'s ſake, we ſhould *have no fellowſhip with theſe unfruitful works of darkneſs*. We may well call them *unfruitful*, for what fruit have we in them, but ſhame and ſorrow? Shame, when we are made ſenſible of the folly of them; or ſorrow and perplexity, as long as we continue to give them credit.

We are told by *Maimonides*, a learned Jew, that the application of any thing, or the uſe of any rite, for the production of any effect in plants, or bodies, where reaſon cannot diſcover the leaſt ſhadow of a natural connection between the cauſe and the effects, their maſters uſed to ſtyle, *the way of the Ammorites*; which they thought to be forbiden, *Levit.* xviii. 3. *after the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, ſhall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, ſhall ye not do, neither ſhall ye walk in their ordinances.* As for *Omens**, there is nothing ſo trivial, but a fancy, this way turned, will make it to be ominous; and as ſuperſtitious tempers are commonly fearful, the moſt ſlight occurrences, whether waking, or in our dreams, are received as meſſengers loaded with evil tidings. Such per-

* See *Spencer of Prodigies.*

perſons, indeed, are always in a dream, and fright themſelves with their own imaginations, which have as little foundation in the reaſon of things, as thoſe terrifying viſions which fancy ſets before us in ſleep. By an endeavour to know *futurities*, we pry into things which God hath decreed to keep concealed. And when *ſecret things belong unto God*, what arrogance is it in us to attempt to wreſt the knowledge of them from him? And what folly to think that what God hides, any of his creatures ſhould be able to divulge? All nature muſt be ſilent, unleſs when inſtructed by the Author of nature to ſpeak his mind. Nor are theſe things ſo harmleſs as may be imagined, being plainly enough included in that prohibition, which cannot be merely temporary, becauſe not founded in reaſons that are ſo---[m] *Ye ſhall not uſe inchantment, nor obſerve times*---where the Hebrew word for uſing inchantment is thought likewiſe to import taking omens from the accidents that happen to us, as from ſneezing, overturning the ſalt, from breaking the ſhoe-latchet, and ſuch like things. And again, [n] *There ſhall not be found among you any one that uſeth divination, or an obſerver of times, or an inchanter*; that is, ſaith *Munſter*, any one who inquires by ſigns or lots, whether it be proper to enter on a journey, or to begin an undertaking, as by the falling of a ſtaff,

[m] Lev. xix. 26. [n] Deut. xviii. 10.

ſtaff, this way or that, the opening of a book on ſuch and ſuch words; and many other things of the ſame nature, which might be mentioned. And the word which we tranſlate an *inchanter*, forbids the ſeeking the knowledge of any thing future by a curious attendance to any ſingular and unuſual occurrence in common life. It is to be lamented that perſons of a ſober character ſhould countenance theſe idle and groundleſs uſages, to ſay no worſe of them, which are of much the ſame ſpecies as thoſe of which we have a ſolemn renunciation. ° *And many that believed came, and confeſſed, and ſhewed their deeds. Many alſo of them that uſed curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men*; &c. The Chriſtian Church found it neceſſary to condemn them, and the Fathers of the Church inveighed warmly againſt them, particularly, againſt what we may call *magical phyſick*, or the art of curing diſeaſes by charms and amulets; tho' they ſometimes ſeem to have diſliked them as they were *pagan*, more than as they were *ſuperſtitious*, ſubſtituting chriſtian ſpells in the room of thoſe uſed by the heathens. For what is the believer's ſigning himſelf with the ſign of the croſs better, ſaying, *this is my armour, this my medicament*, which one of the Fathers gravely recommends?

° Acts xix. 18, 19.

In ſhort, to be influenced and governed by theſe ſuperſtitious imaginations, as ſome are, making them their rule, and building the quiet of their lives upon them, argues a weakneſs of mind, and makes others think leſs worthily of their *devotion*, for this very reaſon, as if that too were the effect of weakneſs and timidity. Let it be ſeen that we are free from thoſe vain terrors, that the *ſcriptures* are our rule in matters of a religious concern, and our *reaſon* and *prudence* in other things. Our *reaſon* I ſay, and not our *imagination*, or *vulgar traditions*; that we have a firm belief of the Providence of God, and with a perfect compoſure of ſoul can truſt ourſelves and our affairs to its direction, neither amuſing nor affrighting ourſelves about things that have no foundation in Reaſon, and muſt therefore be confeſſed to owe all their authority to a ſuperſtitious fancy. Would Chriſtians ſhew themſelves to be men, and ſhake off the yoke that Superſtition hath laid upon them in theſe, and other inſtances, they would ſoon recover a part of that reputation which Religion thro' their means hath loſt.

2. Another inſtance of Superſtition is laying a great deal of ſtreſs upon little things. I ſpeak not this to diſſuade any from a regard to the *leaſt* things which they apprehend to be a part of Religion. I do not counſel them to deſpiſe them, becauſe they

they are *comparatively* little. But then, they ſhould have a care how they make them a part of Religion without good reaſon; and if they have reaſon to judge them ſo, ſhould not therefore look upon them as of the eſſence of Religion, and of the utmoſt moment in it. The *Phariſees* would have been ſuperſtitious in *tithing mint, aniſs, and cummin*, altho' they had not neglected the *weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and truth*, ſuppoſing they had been as zealous for the one as for the other, and made them to belong equally to the foundations of Religion. Are there not ſome among the truly devout, that are fond of ceremonies to a degree of Superſtition? And others, who, to avoid this ſort of Superſtition, run into another, by placing too much in the forbearance of all forms and ceremonies in the worſhip of God? Of each ſide men are not contented to think their own way the moſt perfect, but they would fain have the things about which they differ accounted matters of the laſt importance; and can hardly have charity for one another, or allow that God may have a favour for any but thoſe of their own opinion. Some are ſo attached to a ſet of words and phraſes, that all ſhall be deemed enemies to the doctrines of Chriſtianity, who do not agree to expreſs them exactly in the ſame manner they do. Perhaps they are words of hu-

man invention, the terms of a party, not of ſcripture, but being conſecrated by time, they have a kind of religious veneration for them, and becauſe they have been accuſtomed to them from their infancy cannot forbear making them a teſt of every one's ſoundneſs in the faith. Or ſuppoſing them to be taken from ſcripture, yet they may be miſapplied, as to the meaning which they affix to them, or may be obſcure and doubtful; for which reaſon it cannot be unlawful, and may be expedient, in ſome caſes, to make uſe of others; ſince it is not at all credible that God hath confined us to the uſe of any words, when there is a manifeſt neceſſity that we ſhould ſometimes make uſe of other words to explain thoſe of ſcripture. How common is it for perſons to value themſelves upon their non-compliance with the innocent cuſtoms of the world, in their habit and language; as if good breeding, and civility of manners broke in upon one or more the of Ten Commandments, and they ſhould pleaſe God by being contrary to all other men? While others, forgeting what our Saviour hath ſaid, that [p] *nothing which enters into a man defileth him*; and one of his Apoſtles, that [q] *every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refuſed, if received with thankſgiving*; have the ſame abhorrence for *things ſtrangled and blood*, as for the greater crimes mentioned together with

[p] Mark vii. 15. [q] 1 Tim. iv. 4.

with them; not conſidering the difference in circumſtances between us and the Chriſtians of that time; and that even then, the Apoſtles were far from puting *fornication*, and eating [r] *things ſtrangled*, on the ſame foot of unlawfulneſs; and the Chriſtians, for whoſe ſake they made this decree, as far from ſo underſtanding them.

The great things of Religion, the plain uncontroverted precepts are not a few, according to that of the Pſalmiſt, [s] *thy commandment is exceeding broad*; and theſe are the things in which Chriſtians ſhould exerciſe themſelves, and endeavour to excell. And as for leſſer things, which they conceive to fall under a divine command, though they ought not to overlook them, or *break the leaſt of God's commandments*, yet ſhould they not ſtrive for thoſe diſputable things, as for others that are on all hands agreed to be of very high moment and conſequence. They who thus confound great things and little, plain and diſputable, would do well to conſider thoſe words of the Apoſtle *Paul.* [t] *Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worſe.* It is worth our obſervation, that the ſame Apoſtle ſaith this, who, in another place, tells us, [u] *he that doubteth is damned if he eat*, or rather is *condemned*

[r] Acts xv. 20. [s] Pſal. cxix. 96.
[t] 1 Cor. viii. 8. [u] Rom. xiv. 23.

of himſelf, in doing what he cannot juſtify to his own conſcience. From which two Places laid together we may form this rule, that tho' we muſt exactly follow the perſuaſions of conſcience, in the moſt minute things, yet we muſt not imagine that theſe minuter things, in which good men themſelves differ, are thoſe that chiefly recommend us to the favour of God: we muſt not imagine, that we are really the better for them, or Chriſtians, otherwiſe minded, the worſe for not obſerving them. By bickering for leſſer things with as much earneſtneſs as for great, the profeſſors of the Goſpel teach the enemies of it to eſteem the great things of Religion as little. And indeed, there is ſome danger that they themſelves, if they happen to be convinced of their miſtake, may go further than they ſhould, and together with little things, be tempted to lay aſide others that are greater, ſuppoſing that they may have been deceived in theſe latter, as well as in the former.

3. Were there the like occaſion for it among us, as among ſome Chriſtians, I ſhould inſtance in mens practiſing unneceſſary, and even hurtful rigours, as one of the bitter fruits of Superſtition.——But of this in the next Diſcourſe.

SER-

SERMON II.

On the Errors and Imperfections of Christians.

ROM. XIV. 16.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of.

THE Doctrine laid down in the preceding Discourse was this.

It is the duty of all professing Christians to be exceeding careful that what is good in itself do not, through some fault of theirs, pass under an ill name.

In handling this Subject I proposed,

I. To open the Doctrine under these two heads, *namely*, as the duty relates to Christians in general; and as it more particularly affects those that *love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.*

1. I conſidered the advice as it reſpected indifferently all the profeſſors of the Goſpel.

I then paſſed on,

11. To explain the duty of behaving ſo that *our good be not evil ſpoken of*, as it particularly affects real Chriſtians, or thoſe that *love the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity*.

The imperfections of Chriſtians I ranged under theſe particulars---Things that ſavour a little too much of Superſtition and Enthuſiaſm---Indiſcretions---Blemiſhes of a moral kind in their private conduct---Defects in the ſocial virtues.

1. There are ſometimes found in good men certain things which ſavour too much of *Superſtition* and *Enthuſiaſm*. Such as the following.

1. Having recourſe to ſpells and charms and divinations for the cure of bodily diſeaſes, the diſcovery of things loſt or future, the obſervation of lucky or unlucky days, and places, and the like.

2. Another inſtance of Superſtition is laying a great deal of ſtreſs upon little things.

I now proceed.

3. Were there the like occaſion for it among us, as among ſome Chriſtians, I ſhould inſtance in mens practiſing unneceſſary and even hurtful rigours as one of the bitter fruits

fruits of Superſtition. I ſhould take notice of their emaciating the body, ſo as to render it more like the body of one whom God hath viſited with ſome ſore diſtemper, making his beauty to conſume away like a moth, than of a perſon in health; of their ſcourgings, and other voluntary penances, forbearing all food for a long while together, and making it a point of conſcience not to allow themſelves in the uſe of any food that is pleaſant. I might argue with them on the unreaſonableneſs of ſuch ſeverities, ſince that can never be a duty which unfits us for other duties, nor can we at the ſame time be obliged to ſerve God with our bodies as well as our ſouls, and to uſe our bodies ſo hardly that they ſhall be diſabled for this ſervice. I might mind them, that this is being *righteous over-much*, and is often practiſed to compenſate for being *over-much wicked* in other reſpects; a mortified countenance not always arguing a mortified heart, and well-diſciplined paſſions; nor a ſhew of poverty in the life, true poverty of ſpirit. I might obſerve that ſuch auſterities, inſtead of miniſtering to devotion, extinguiſh the very life and ſpirit of it, by depreſſing the mind together with the body; that they have an ill effect on the tempers of men, to make them, moroſe, and ſour, and uncharitable; that they reproach the goodneſs of God, preſent the world with a falſe idea of him, contradict

tradict that of the Apoſtle, that *God hath given us all things richly to injoy*, and proceed on an utter miſtake of Religion, the *inſtrumental* duties of which are, by them, ſet in the firſt place, and the *means* prefered to the *end*. Theſe, I ſay, are ſome of the conſiderations, upon which I ſhould enlarge, were I to ſpeak in ſome places, and before ſome perſons. But alas, I doubt there is but little occaſion, among us, for admoniſhing men to ſpare themſelves; they do it ſure enough, and more than enough, without being adviſed to it. We ſeldom ſee among thoſe who make conſcience of their ways, any who carry the duty of mortification too far; it would be well if they carried it ſo far as they ſhould. However, it may not be amiſs to have juſt mentioned theſe things, that if any ſhould be inclined to hearken to the dictates of Superſtition, and to practiſe ſelf-denials which God hath not commanded, *(which things*, indeed, *have a ſhew of wiſdom in will-worſhip, and humility, and neglecting*, or pinching, *the body)* or to queſtion their own ſincerity, or that of other Chriſtians, becauſe they do not live a life of ſuch extreme mortification, they may by recollecting the little I have now ſaid, and purſuing it in their own thoughts, be convinced that Superſtition is at the bottom of ſuch opinions and practices; and that by giving way to them they ſhall but make their Religion as lank

lank and pining as their bodies, and provoke thoſe that are no friends to ſerious godlineſs to brand it with the infamous name of Superſtition.

The method in which we ſhall moſt conſult our own comfort, and the credit of Religion, is by a ſober, temperate uſe of bodily refreſhments, joined with ſuch occaſional ſelf-denials, as *conſcience* perſuades, and *prudence* regulates; by means of which the ſoul is preſerved in greater vigour, and hath at once a freer injoyment of itſelf, and more abſolute command over the body. The great deſign of all the duties, and inſtitutions of Religion, is to purify and exalt the ſpiritual part of man, to leſſen the temptations of the fleſhly part, and aſſiſt him in ſubduing them, to mortify ſin, and to invigorate and ſtrengthen gracious principles, to render men uſeful in this world, and to fit them for a better. And this being the great deſign of Religion, ſuch a treatment of the body, and ſuch meaſures in regard of its injoyments, are moſt adviſable, as beſt anſwer this deſign. And when mortification is thus conducted, it will be virtue that no good Chriſtian need be aſhamed of.

4. There is more Superſtition than ſome good people are aware of, in indulging to a gloomy melancholy temper, from a miſapprehenſion that it is moſt agreeable to Religion,

ligion, and what God moſt delights in. " Theſe are your religious perſons (will the " world ſay); their Religion hath made " them mad; or they were half mad be- " fore, and that hath made them religious. " Theſe are the ways of wiſdom, as they " will have it; and of pleaſantneſs and peace, " in which thoſe that travel are utter ſtran- " gers to pleaſure, mere mopes, and ſta- " tues." For the ſake of Religion, there- fore, if not for their own, ſuch dejected Chriſtians ſhould labour after a more ſerene and chearful habit of mind. What father would like to ſee his children, or what maſ- ter his ſervants, go up and down, all the day long, penſive and mourning, as the manner is of ſome Chriſtians? Would not perſons unacquainted with the parent or maſ- ter, in ſuch a caſe, be ready to take up hard thoughts of them, and to pity thoſe under their government? As *ſorrow* is not the only paſſion belonging to the nature of man, ſo neither is it the only one that be- longs to Religion. There is ſuch an affec- tion as *joy*, and ſuch a duty as *praiſe* and *thankſgiving*; (elſe why are we commanded, *always, and in every thing to give thanks?*) and how this duty can be performed, as it ought to be, without this affection, I am not able to conceive. The ſame temper that diſpoſeth for the exerciſes of praiſe and love and gratitude, which ought to be ſome of

of the chief and moſt conſtant imployments of the Chriſtian, muſt, I am ſure, diſpoſe him for a calm and pleaſing injoyment of himſelf, and of every thing elſe that can contribute to the true happineſs of life. Nay, *joy* is not only what the Chriſtian is obliged to, as it is the ground-work of praiſe, but is itſelf a diſtinct duty, and founded on a diſtinct command, [a] *Rejoyce evermore.* This *joy*, rightly explained, doth not refuſe for its companion that *godly ſorrow* for ſin, which both by our bleſſed Lord himſelf, and by his Apoſtle hath the greateſt encomiums beſtowed upon it. On the contrary, mourning for ſin, whether at the firſt entrance on the chriſtian life, or in the progreſs of it, beſides the ſatisfaction immediately accompanying it, is the great foundation of the pleaſure which aſſurance brings with it, and of joy in God, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom alſo we receive the attonement. Such a *joy* as this I am pleading for, renders Religion more natural and agreeable to the religious perſon himſelf, and more amiable to the beholder. An air and deportment that ſhew a man to be eaſy in himſelf, and ſeldom fail of attending on a good conſcience, where it is not under the reſtraint of wrong principles, will be moſt likely to gain converts to godlineſs; while the contrary demeanour, at the ſame time that

[a] 1 Theſ. v. 16.

that it betrays a ſuperſtitious and ſervile dread of the divine Being, will be apt to drive all but ſuch as are of a ſorrowful ſpirit from a way of life, that appears ſo diſmal and unentertaining.

According to the *Jewiſh Maſters*, a chearful compoſed frame of ſoul was one qualification for the *ſpirit of prophecy*; and is it not a very natural reflection which hath been made on this occaſion, that what was a qualification for the *ſpirit of prophecy* cannot well be thought inconſiſtent with the *ſpirit of holineſs?* The fruit of the Spirit is not only *love*, but *peace* and *joy*; which bleſſed fruit we cannot expect he ſhould produce in us, as long as we do all that we are able to unfit ourſelves for it, and refuſe to be comforted. I will conclude this particular with obſerving, that an innocent pleaſantneſs equally remote from a *light*, *frothy* carriage, and a *ſtupid*, or *pining*, or *ſullen* melancholy, is what every Chriſtian ſhould ſtrive to attain to, being in itſelf greatly deſireable, and having a moſt friendly influence on our Religion, both in the ſpeculation, and practice; preſerving the *ſoundneſs of the judgment*, which will be one means of ſecuring us from error, and making us more ſtrong, and active, and vigorous, in the diſcharge of our duty.

5. Shall I propoſe it to be conſidered, whether the notions commonly received of the

the *Lord's-Supper* do not border too much upon Superſtition? It is not my ſingle opinion that they do, but of perſons, not leſs eminent for their ſerioufneſs and devotion, than for their knowledge in divine things. Indeed the nature of this inſtitution, as a *holy* feſtival, in which all preſent are ſuppoſed to have communion with one another, and with all ſaints, by mutual love, and with Jeſus Chriſt, their common Lord and Head, by the participation of his Spirit, and by a living faith; together with that direction of the *Apoſtle*, that a man *examine himſelf*, and then eat of this bread and drink of this cup; theſe, I ſay, with ſome other arguments, that are well enough known, ſeem to reſtrain the right of communicating to ſuch as make a credible profeſſion of Chriſtianity. For what have ſcandalous ſinners, the openly looſe and profane, whom the Apoſtle *Paul* pronounces [b] *the enemies of the croſs of Chriſt*, to do, to meddle with an ordinance dedicated to the memory of this crucified Saviour, and intended for the peculiar conſolation of his faithful friends and diſciples? But ſtill, as this ſacrament hath the name of a [c] *feaſt*, though a feaſt to which none beſides a ſelect company are to be admited, may we not carry our reverence for it *too far?* Or rather may we not miſtake in the *nature* of the reve-

[b] Phil. iii. 18. [c] 1 Cor v. 8.

reverence that we pay it? And is not this actually the caſe, as often as a ſecret terror poſſeſſeth us, in our approaches to it, and while we are receiving; incapacitating us for that holy delight in God, and cordial taſte of his goodneſs, that confidence in the merits of Chriſt, that chearfulneſs in his ſervice, that flow of grateful affection on the remembrance of his dying love, and joyful expectation of his glorious appearance, which ſhould ever accompany this bleſſed ſolemnity? In the primitive church the *Lord's-Supper* returned as often as the *Lord's-Day*; and the ſame writers, by whom we are informed of this, tell us further, that the more devout had their *daily communions*. But as the ſpirit of piety decayed, a falſe veneration for the ordinances of Chriſt was ſet up in the room of it; and that was made a mark of the church's mighty regard for an ordinance ſhe had received from her Saviour, (I mean the *unfrequency* of celebrating it) which really proceeded at firſt from the declenſion of her love to him, and zeal for his memory. What is it keeps ſo many from the Lord's-Table, who want not an inclination to come to it, nor, as charity would judge, the qualifications required to worthy receiving? What makes others ſcrupulouſly abſent themſelves, if they have been *hindered by the Providence of God* from ſpending the uſual time in the exer-

ciſes,

ciſes, of the cloſet and the church, that are preparatory to it? What is the reaſon of all this, but a wrong notion of this Sacrament, as if it was of a nature ſo much more ſacred and awful than the other inſtitutions of Religion, that people had better entirely neglect a plain and acknowledged command of their Saviour than run the leaſt hazard of not obſerving it in the moſt worthy manner; and occaſionally loſe an opportunity of *ſhewing forth the death of Chriſt*, (though every ſuch opportunity be *precious*, and may, for ought they know, be the *laſt*; and though in the temper and habit of their ſouls they are prepared) than omit, without any fault of their own, thoſe rules of preparation which they have laid down to themſelves? To the ſame leaven of Superſtition, I doubt we are in part to aſcribe thoſe *unſcriptural terms* which have been impoſed in admiſſion of church-members; as for inſtance, receiving in ſuch a particular poſture, and no other; laying before the church an account of thoſe experiences which the perſons preſenting themſelves for communion have had of a work of grace on their ſouls; that is, in ſhort, doing things for which the impoſers are not able to produce either the *command* or *example* of our Lord. The reaſon is, that out of their extraordinary reſpect for this ordinance, they are willing to do more to raiſe people's eſteem of it,

and to fence and guard it againſt intruders, than the Law-giver himſelf hath ſeen fit to do.

6. Aſcribing to the *Spirit* of God what doth not belong to him, and is altogether unworthy of him, is a practice of very bad conſequence. This is proper *Enthuſiaſm*, when men miſtake the workings of their own minds, and even of their fancies and paſſions, for the immediate and extraordinary operations of the *Divine Spirit*. True, but weak Chriſtians, ſuch as have little judgment, or whoſe imaginations are too ſtrong for it, are moſt liable to fall into this ſnare; eſpecially, if they have a more than ordinary degree of pride in their natural temper, and this pride hath been cheriſhed by falſe notions inſtilled into them in their education. There is without all doubt ſuch a thing as *Divine Aſſiſtance*, to which every good man may ſafely lay claim, particularly, in the duty of Prayer. [d] *Likewiſe the Spirit alſo helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itſelf maketh interceſſion for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that ſearcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, becauſe he maketh interceſſion for the ſaints according to the will of God.*

However ſome have taken the liberty, very indecently, (that I may not ſay profanely)

[d] Rom. viii. 26, 27.

fanely) to redicule the phraſe of *Praying by the Spirit*, I can ſee nothing improper in it, if underſtood in a qualified ſenſe, which I apprehend to be the ſenſe of it in the 20*th verſe* of *Jude*'s Epiſtle; *Praying in*, or by, *the Holy Ghoſt*. He is ſtiled the *Spirit of Prayer and Supplication*; this is one great part of his office, to direct the people of God in framing thoſe requeſts, for which the *Son*, as Mediator, procures a gracious audience. He irradiates the darkened mind, kindles and fans the holy fire; he fixes the attention, unites the heart, excites and maintains devout affections; nay, there is reaſon to believe he ſometimes doth more than all this; my meaning is, that he brings things to remembrance which the Chriſtian might otherwiſe forget, and leads the ſoul into a train of pious thoughts and meditations. Yet after all, we cannot be certain *when* he doth this; theſe operations of the *Spirit* not being eaſily diſtinguiſhable from thoſe of our own rational faculties, which he imperceptibly guides, and influences. And when he doth it, it is not to encourage our ſloth, but our diligence, and by way of bleſſing on our own previous endeavours.

In every age of the church ſuch a diſpenſation of the *Spirit* as this may be allowed. Whether any thing more can, I very much queſtion. I do not find the ſcripture affords

us any ground to look for it. And yet, ſome high-flown profeſſors will talk in ſuch a manner of their *Praying and Preaching, by the Spirit*, as implies the ſame immediate and miraculous communication of his gifts, as that promiſed by our Saviour to his Apoſtles; [e] *When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye ſhall ſpeak; for it is not ye that ſpeak, but the Spirit of your Father that ſpeaketh in you.* When they are called to officiate in the church, or in more private meetings of their fellow Chriſtians, they would not be thought to diſparage the aſſiſtance of the *Spirit* ſo much as to premeditate, and ſo many times utter ſuch crude, unguarded, expreſſions (to ſay the leaſt of them) as have not only expoſed the way of *free* Prayer to contempt, but occaſioned the making it a mark of fanaticiſm to talk much of the *Spirit*'s aſſiſtance in Prayer, or any other duty. Can ſober underſtanding Chriſtians, that will give themſelves leave to think the matter over a little, ſuppoſe that the *Spirit* uſually dictates the particular thoughts, or at any time the very words and expreſſions; and this without any preparation and care on our part? Should Chriſtians univerſally practiſe on ſuch a notion as this, what wild work would it ſoon make? How little to the edification of the moſt piouſly diſpoſed would

[e] Mat. x. 19, 20.

would the offices of Religion be performed? And how much to the ſcandal and offence of others? It is very probable, that among other miraculous gifts which God was pleaſed to beſtow on the Chriſtian Church in the begining, this of *Prayer* was one; and that the Apoſtle *Paul* hath an eye to it, when he ſaith, [f] *I will Pray with the Spirit, and I will Pray with the Underſtanding alſo.* To Pray *with the Spirit*, was to Pray by a ſupernatural inſpiration of the *Spirit*; as to Pray *with the Underſtanding*, was to exerciſe his own Underſtanding in Prayer, and to Pray ſo that thoſe preſent might underſtand, and be profited by what was ſaid. But ſince other miraculous gifts are ceaſed, I would fain know on what foundation they build, who contend for the continuance of this. I am very free to acknowledge the *Gift of Prayer*, provided it be not ſtretched too far; as it certainly is, when it leaves little or no room for diſtinction between the Prayers of *gifted* Chriſtians at the firſt planting of the Goſpel, and now that the Goſpel hath been eſtabliſhed for ſo many ages; and renders it needleſs to take any pains for our own improvement, to think or meditate before our Prayers, or to follow any rule and method in them. —So much for the *firſt head* of Imperfections, conſiſting of ſuperſtitious and enthuſiaſtical weakneſſes.

[f] 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

11. Very good Christians have their *Indiscretions*; and these such, as, together with themselves, to make their Religion less honourably thought of both in religious matters, and in their common affairs.

1. In religious matters it were to be wished some good men would exercise more *prudence* than they do. Our divine Master, in his first mission of the disciples, tells them, [s] *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and scourge you in their synagogues.* If our Master himself be a proper judge, the characters of the *dove* and the *serpent* do very well agree together, and help out each other; notwithstanding which, some by their conduct seem to declare themselves of another opinion. With this counsel of our Saviour, we have the concurrence of his own practice and example, who, till his hour was come, would not put himself into the hands of his enemies, nor needlessly provoke them by too direct and publick an avowal of his being the Messiah, or Christ. It can be no part of *prudence*, every body will own, for a man to run himself upon inconveniences, which he may honourably decline; and if it be no part of *prudence*, I should think it is none of

[s] Mat. x. 16, 17.

of *Religion*; ſince *Religion*, which is a wiſe and reaſonable thing, can never oblige us to any thing that is unreaſonable and fooliſh; and whether it be any better to invite ſufferings, when we are not called to them, and they will anſwer no valuable end, let any wiſe man judge. [h] *The prudent will keep ſilence in that time, for it is an evil time.* The Prophet thought that ſilence might ſometimes be in ſeaſon, and allows us to judge *that* ſuch a ſeaſon, when, through the iniquity of the times, we ſhall by ſpeaking do ourſelves more hurt, than we can propoſe to do others good. To thoſe who neglect this caution we may ſay in the words of the royal preacher, [i] *Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyſelf over-wiſe; why ſhouldeſt thou deſtroy thyſelf?* The advice of the Apoſtle ſhould never be forgoten, [k] *Walk in wiſdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time.* In your converſation with them, and demeanour towards them, you ſhould be cautious how you give them any advantage againſt you by doing things which the wiſe and conſiderate will forbear. And there is the ſame, or greater, reaſon why Chriſtians ſhould walk in wiſdom among *themſelves*; conſulting their common intereſt, and managing both themſelves, and whatever controverſies happen to ariſe among them, in ſuch a manner, as not to weaken and ex-

[h] Amos v. 13. [i] Eccleſ. vii. 16. [k] Col. iv. 5.

poſe the cauſe they eſpouſe; that what is ſaid of *Jeruſalem* in a literal ſenſe may be true of them in a moral, [1] *Jeruſalem is builded as a city that is compact together.* Hath not our Saviour further warned us againſt *throwing our pearls before ſwine, leſt they turn again and rent us?* Mat. vii. 6. Which piece of prudence we overlook, when we reprove and adviſe perſons, from whom we have no return to expect but hatred and ill language; as we are likewiſe guilty of great indiſcretion, when we ſcatter our reproofs and admonitions without any conſideration of time or place or manner, and talk religiouſly out of ſeaſon. It is indeed very much to be lamented, that the duty of fraternal reproof is not more faithfully practiſed, and that uſeful and religious diſcourſe, ſuch as that recommeded by the Apoſtle, *Eph.* iv. 29. is become ſo unfaſhionable. This is very true; but will not juſtify an indiſcriminate uſe of theſe things; ſince the *wiſe man* hath obſerved, *there is a time for all things*; and it is the office of prudence to note and conſult that time. We ſhould never be guilty of a baſe and cowardly concealment of the truth, nor appear in any other garb than that of virtue and piety, in order to pleaſe the company, and be more conformable to the world; this would be an extreme of dangerous conſequence to ourſelves, as the other extreme, of making more

[1] Pſal. cxxii. 3.

more ſhew than needs of our virtue and goodneſs, is diſſerviceable to the cauſe of Religion, by provoking the envy and ſpite of ill men, or tempting them to cenſure us as proud and hypocritical, or as fantaſtical and ſilly.

2. Religion hath ſuffered by the *imprudence* of its followers in their ordinary conduct. There is an unlucky obſervation, (which, how true it is, I leave others to conſider) that the moſt ſkilful in their ſeveral trades and profeſſions are thoſe that are leaſt ſerious; and that your plain ſober honeſt men are commonly but indifferent artiſts. The ſimple in a religious ſenſe are charged with being the ſame in another that is not ſo creditable. It is pity it ſhould be ſo; but ſo, I fear, it ſometimes is. How unaccountable is the management of too many as to their worldly buſineſs? They ſeem to have no notion of forecaſt and deſign, nor to act by any rule. They blunder on in the dark, act hand over head, and, unleſs it be in the plaineſt caſes, are continually making wrong ſteps, entangling and perplexing their affairs, and inſtead of advancing forward runing backward; not for want of natural capacity, which they are not anſwerable for, but of a little more thought and conſideration. Certainly, when our Saviour tells us, that [m] *the children of this world are in their generation wiſer than the chil-*

[m] Luke xvi. 8.

children of light; his design was not to discourage any from being wise with respect to this world as well as the other. *Christian* prudence it is true demands the *first* place, and *moral* prudence the *second*, but *secular* prudence may be allowed the *third*. We should *seek first the kingdom of heaven*, and after that may mind other things. He that keeps a good conscience cannot be too prudent in common affairs. The best excuse, for the indiscretions and over-sights of good men in worldly things, is, that they are so intent on their higher concerns as to neglect those of a more trivial nature. They cannot at once be attentive to both. But why not? Industry in our worldly imployments doth not clash with diligence in the work of our salvation; the same scriptures, which command one, command both; which they may find it of use to consider, who, to excuse their not being so careful as they should in their worldly callings, bestow more time than ordinary on the immediate care of their souls. And why then should prudence in one be any more inconsistent with prudence in the other? Yea, to how little purpose is industry in our common affairs without prudence? And how helpful is prudence in our common calling to the duties of our christian vocation? [n] *A good man sheweth favour and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion.*

By

[n] Psal. cxii. 5.

By a prudent œconomy he will be able to maintain good works for neceſſary uſes. In the government of their families, the education of their children, their converſation in the world, their traffick and negotiations with others, they ſhould not only ſtudy to ſhew themſelves upright, (though this ſhould be their principal aim) but to be diſcreet too, that there may be no colour for that invidious reflection, that none but weak and ſhallow people are religious.——This is the *ſecond head* of Imperfections, which eclipſe the graces of God's people, and are the cauſe that their good is evil ſpoken of, namely, their *Indiſcretions.*

III. The next are blemiſhes, of a *moral kind*, in their *private* conduct. Obſerve, I ſay *blemiſhes*, not groſs and eſſential errors, which will not ſtand with ſincerity.

1. Some are not ſo conſtantly and exactly *regular* as they ought to be, who, I would yet hope, are in the number of God's children. The freedoms they take cannot be juſtified, they diſcover too great remains of ſenſuality; the carnal principle is not ſo thoroughly mortified, nor vitious inclinations ſo perfectly ſubdued, but that they ſometimes hurry them beyond the bounds of ſtrict temperance and decorum, to the endangering of their good name and reputation, if not of their ſouls. The uſe made of ſuch examples

amples by wicked men is to harden themſelves in their evil courſes, and to pleaſe themſelves with a conceit, that tho' they are bad, yet not worſe, but rather better, conſidering all things, than thoſe who make greater pretenſions to piety. "Where is the "mighty difference (ſay they) between your "godly people and us, ſaving that they ſet "up for ſomething in Religion when they "are nothing, while we are willing to be "known for what we are, and ſo never "trouble ourſelves to palliate our faults?" In this, no doubt, they ſlander you; ſince, whatever they ſay, there muſt be a viſible difference between real Chriſtians that walk leaſt circumſpectly, and the vitious part of the world.

But is not the charge ſo far true, that too many of thoſe who profeſs an eſteem for Religion, and do ſincerely eſteem and love it, live too negligently, indulge to their fleſhly appetites more than becomes them, and drink more than they ſhould, tho' not more than they can bear; enough to enflame their Paſſions, tho' not to extinguiſh their Reaſon? They do not preſerve that juſt ſobriety, that guard upon their appetites, that moderation with reſpect to corporeal injoyments, which chriſtian decency requires; by which means they render themſelves leſs fit for divine converſes, and ſpiritual delights; and not only ſo, but lay a ſtumbling-block in the way of others,

and

and hurt, inſtead of edifying, them by their example. Ah, why will not profeſſors be perſuaded to greater caution and vigilance? They promiſe it from time to time; and why do they not perform, as well as promiſe and reſolve? *Nature*, before it is ſpoiled by ill habits, is ſatisfied with little; let the world ſee that *Grace* can enable you to be ſatisfied with leſs. Temperance is reckoned among the fruits of the *Spirit*, [o] *againſt which there is no law.* There is no objection lies againſt this virtue, every body is ready to praiſe and admire it in others; and where the power of godlineſs is, every body expects it. Indeed, temperance always goes along with godlineſs; the *Grace* that teaches one, teaches the other; [p] but not always in that degree, which is neceſſary to make godlineſs appear with its proper brightneſs and ſplendor. Convince the world that you have better pleaſures, better in your own eſteem, than thoſe of eating and drinking, or any of the low and vulgar delights of ſenſe, for which you reſerve yourſelves, and, which that you may be more capable of reliſhing, you exerciſe abſtinence in others.

2. *Paſſions* not well-governed, are a great reproach to the perſon in whom they are obſerved, be he otherwiſe of never ſo great worth. Unguarded paſſions ruffle the ſoul, pervert the judgment, and obſcure the graces of

[o] Gal. v. 23. [p] Tit. ii. 12.

of the *Spirit*; ſo that they are like the lights of heaven in a ſtorm, which are hardly ſeen, or are no ſooner ſeen than they are again ſnatched from the view. Religion ſhews to great diſadvantage in ſuch a temper. What fooliſh things do wiſe and good men throw out in their paſſions; and ſometimes worſe than fooliſh? Their friends bluſh, their enemies laugh, their character ſuffers, and they, when they come to be cool, are heartily aſhamed to reflect on what they have ſaid and done. And reaſon enough they ſhould be ſo, to think that Chriſtians ſhould behave themſelves ſo little like men; that they who have not only *Reaſon*, but *Grace*, to conquer their paſſions, ſhould, with this double guard and aſſiſtance, be overcome by them. To what purpoſe have men *Reaſon* and *Grace*, if they do not uſe them? Wherein doth the ſtrength of this divine principle, called *Grace*, appear? Have not ſome by the ſingle force of moral wiſdom, and reſolution, done more towards the conqueſt of their paſſions, than theſe men with all the boaſted aids of *Grace?* Thus, we muſt expect, the world will talk when we have opened their mouths. We cannot be ſurprized if they imploy the weapons we have put into their hands againſt Religion; which becauſe it exerts but little power in us, at leaſt viſibly, will be concluded to have little or none in itſelf. O that Chriſtians would ſet themſelves to redeem the

the credit of divine *Grace*, which they have ſo much wronged by their violent inordinate paſſions! Let the ſtrength of *Grace* be ſeen by its being ſtronger than the ſtrongeſt of our paſſions; otherwiſe, men will be ready to queſtion whether there is any ſuch thing; or, at beſt, whether we are poſſeſſed of it: as, indeed, we ſhall have too much ground to queſtion it ourſelves.

The government of the thoughts and paſſions is one of the beſt marks of a ſupernatural power and ability; the former to a man's ſelf, the latter both in regard of himſelf and others. There are other paſſions in which good men are ſubject to exceſs, beſides anger, and by exceſs in which they leſſen and ſully their character. To be lifted up with a little worldly ſucceſs, or vexed and put out of patience at a ſlight diſappointment, to be tranſported with joy on ſmall occaſions, or plunged in grief, or held in ſuſpence with reſtleſs hopes and fears; theſe are all of them arguments of *a little Mind*, and commonly too of *little Grace*. It is ſtrange, that they who have ſo much greater things to mind, and are convinced of their greatneſs, ſhould be extremely moved and diſordered by little ones. There is one thing, particularly, which I have been ſorry to have been a witneſs to in ſome Chriſtians, and which every one ſhould watch againſt in himſelf; and that is a fretful, peeviſh,

peeviſh, diſcontented humour. Have we gone no further in Chriſtianity than this? We have yet then one principal leſſon to learn, which is that of contentment, whatever our condition and circumſtances may be. It is the unhappy temper of ſome to be always complaining, μεμψίμοιροι, *Jude* 16. finding fault with their lot and portion. I need not ſay, this is unbecoming a Chriſtian, when it is ſo indecent in any reaſonable creature. Like generous liquors that are turned ſour, even the Religion of ſuch perſons hath no pleaſantneſs in it. O what an ornament is a meek, a quiet, and a contented ſpirit! It carries its own reward with it. Would we injoy ourſelves, or adorn our holy profeſſion, let us exerciſe ourſelves herein, to have our paſſions under controul, and obſequious to the dictates of *Reaſon* and *Conſcience*.

3. Another very great blemiſh is *covetouſneſs*, or the love of the world; which, tho' it never reigns in the regenerate, ſo as to be the predominant, determining principle, hath frequently too much power in them. The conteſt betwixt heavenly and earthly things is ſo far decided in every ſuch ſoul, that heavenly things are prefered; but then the preference is not ſo abſolute and entire as it might, and ſhould be. All ſincere Chriſtians ſet their affections *chiefly* on things above, but not *only*; ſo far, alas, from that, that the world keeps poſſeſſion of a conſiderable part,

part, as the *Canaanites* did of the promiſed land after the children of *Iſrael* were ſettled in it. Was the matter to be brought to a final trial, they, who love Chriſt in the loweſt degree that is conſiſtent with ſincerity, would renounce all for his ſake. Ah, why ſhould not their love to their Redeemer be ſo ſuperlatively ſtrong as to diſcover its empire and dominion in every temptation, and in their moſt ordinary actions? Not only by parting with the world, when they can no longer keep it with a good conſcience, but by uſing it aright while it is in their hands; by the moderation of their deſires after it, and their delight in it? There is a vaſt diverſity in mens natural tempers. Some are more generous, others more worldly; ſome deſpiſe riches, others are inclined to over-rate them. Where there is the former generous temper with the addition of God's *Grace*, it is a moſt happy and ſuitable alliance; they promote one the other, and act with greater ſtrength and beauty becauſe they act conjointly. The heavenly life, in ſouls ſo refined, advances apace. It is not ordinarily ſo in the other niggardly temper. Here *Grace* is ſo clogged and fettered, that its operations are hardly diſcernible. The love of God, and the love of the world are in a perpetual ſtruggle. While one puſhes the Chriſtian forward, the other pulls him back; while one enlarges and raiſeth the mind, the

other contracts and depreſſeth it; and the ſoul, having its wings thus entangled and cliped, and its force and vigour abated, can take but ſhort flights towards heaven.

Covetouſneſs diſgraces the moſt ſhining virtues, which, however extraordinary, are but little valued and regarded when joined with avarice; and quite conceals a common virtue. Could we but produce a good number of inſtances of thoſe whoſe tempers led them to be covetous, but were ſo very much changed and exalted by *Grace*, that they could look down with contempt on things which they moſt admired and doated upon in their natural ſtate; never neglecting their duty becauſe it was expenſive, or venturing upon the commiſſion of a known ſin, for any temptation the world could offer, and manifeſting a perfect coldneſs and indifference in the purſuit of temporal riches, when compared with the fervour of their deſires after things ſpiritual and divine; could we, I ſay, produce more examples of this kind, perſons that knew nothing of Religion from their own experience, would have a much greater idea of it than they now have, and be induced to believe it came from heaven by its raiſing men thither. How can we think of this, and not be concerned to find ſuch inſtances ſo exceeding rare? And that, by this means, Chriſtianity hath but little reputation in the world, notwithſtanding the excellency

cellency of its precepts, and the ſublimity of its objects? The low groveling diſpoſition of thoſe, who pretend to be among its intimate acquaintance, is a conſiderable check to it. Wherefore, let all that go under the name of Chriſt's friends and diſciples, impartially examine themſelves in this point, and, if they find their hearts in any degree captivated by worldly affections, oppoſe them to the utmoſt of their power, and be ſure not to do what will gratify and feed them. They ſhould think with themſelves, what judgment the world hath of them, and how great a ſlur their covetouſneſs puts on the graces of God's Spirit in them.

4. The laſt blemiſh, I ſhall mention, in the private character of perſons, on other accounts very valuable, is their doing *mean* and *diſhonourable* things. Chriſtians, who know the things that are excellent, ſhould practiſe no other. Inſtead of which, there are thoſe who deſcend ſo much beneath their character, as to do things, which for their baſeneſs many unregenerate perſons, from a native ſenſe of honour and decency, would ſcorn to be guilty of. Now, methinks, it is pity that theſe two qualities of *goodneſs* and *greatneſs* of ſoul ſhould be ever found aſunder, when they would be ſuch a heightening to the lovelineſs of each other's appearance. I confeſs all true greatneſs of ſoul implies goodneſs, and all goodneſs great-

neſs; but beſides the greatneſs that is inſeparable from goodneſs, one would gladly ſee it united with ſuch a magnanimity, or greatneſs and elevation of heart, as would inſpire a man with a diſdain of little ill-favoured actions. When the Apoſtle would have us [q] *provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men*; [r] *to think of ſuch things*; [s] *to walk honeſtly, as in the day*; (which ſort of precepts do ſo frequently occur in St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles) the original words have another meaning than what is commonly affixed to the word *honeſt* in Engliſh; ſignifying what is *comely, decent, venerable*, and the like. Theſe are the things which the Goſpel calls upon us to ſtudy and practiſe; and which they whoſe breaſts are thoroughly tinctured with its principles, and who have a clear diſcernment of the beauty and deformity, the dignity and meanneſs of actions, will not need many words to explain. Let us therefore avoid what hath a ſordid appearance, as well as the appearance of what is plainly evil. Let us *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called*; which we ſhall never do, in the due extent of that expreſſion, by keeping ourſelves from actions manifeſtly ſinful and diſhoneſt, unleſs we further add an abhorrence of thoſe that are ſhuffling and ſneaking. Let me conſider, how will ſuch an action look? Is it of good report? Will it conciliate eſteem and love? Or does it tend

[q] Rom. xii. 17. [r] Phil. iv. 8. [s] Rom. xiii. 13.

tend to make me contemptible? A jeſt and a by-word to others? To gain me the name of a narrow-ſouled, creeping, intereſted wretch? One of low views, and deſigns? Of coarſe ſentiments? Addicted to tricks and artifices? And deſtitute of all ideas of what is handſome and praiſe-worthy, and of all ambition to excel in it? Let us not forget, that mean and baſe things are contrary to the *dignity* of the Chriſtian profeſſion, as well as things ſinful to the *holineſs* of it.—I have now done with the *third head* of Imperfections, being blemiſhes of a *moral kind* in the Chriſtian's more *private* conduct.

IV. The diſciples of Chriſt expoſe their *good to be evil ſpoken of*, when they are remarkably deficient in the *Social Virtues.* I mean not thoſe which are eſſential to ſociety, ſuch as juſtice, and veracity, (for theſe no true Chriſtian can want) but ſuch as contribute to its well-being.—But of this, with what remains on this Subject, in another Diſcourſe.

SERMON III.

On the Errors and Imperfections of Chriſtians.

ROM. XIV. 16.

Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of.

FROM theſe words I laid down the following Doctrine.

It is the duty of all profeſſing Chriſtianity to be exceeding careful that what is good in itſelf do not, through ſome fault of theirs, paſs under an ill name.

In handling this ſubject I propoſed, *Firſt*, ſomewhat largely to open, and explain the Doctrine; and *Secondly*, prove and enforce it by proper conſiderations.

I. I was to open the Doctrine under theſe two heads, *namely*, as the duty relates to

Chriſtians in general; and as it particularly affects thoſe that *love the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity.*

I. I conſidered the advice as it reſpected indifferently all the profeſſors of the Goſpel.

I then proceeded,

II. To explain the duty of behaving ſo that *our good be not evil ſpoken of*, as it particularly affects real Chriſtians, or thoſe that *love our Lord Jeſus in ſincerity.*

The Imperfections of Chriſtians I conſidered under the following particulars.

I. There are ſometimes found in good men certain things which ſavour too much of *Superſtition* and *Enthuſiaſm.*

II. Very good Chriſtians have their *Indiſcretions*; and theſe ſuch as, together with themſelves, to make their Religion leſs honourably thought of, both in religious matters and in their common affairs.

III. There are blemiſhes of a *moral kind* in their *private* conduct.

I now go on to the laſt particular of the Imperfections of Chriſtians.

IV. The diſciples of Chriſt expoſe their *good to be evil ſpoken of*, when they are remarkably deficient in the *Social Virtues.* I mean

mean not thoſe which are eſſential to ſociety, ſuch as juſtice, and veracity, (for theſe no true Chriſtian can want) but ſuch as contribute to its well-being. Of which ſort are theſe following.

1. The love of ſociety being planted in our very nature, there is ſomewhat ſavage and unnatural in flying from it, and affecting a recluſe and ſolitary life. Solitude and ſociety, retirement and converſation, have each of them, their advantages, and, when they take their turns, may yield as much comfort as profit. It is too evident to be denied, that good company is hard to be met with. But I would hope, there is ſome ſuch, or at leaſt ſome that is innocent; and, let it be but innocent, we ought not wholly to ſhun it. A wiſe man will find his account in it; nor ſhould a good man ſtand aloof from it, or think it his duty to behave himſelf in it with ſhineſs and reſerve. What conſtruction will people put upon ſuch an averſion to ſociety? Will they not be ready to attribute it to pride? Or, if they do not reſolve it into pride, will they not derive it from ſome other cauſe, not much more for our credit?

Man is a ſociable Being; and I dare affirm, they are under a great miſtake who have a notion of the *new creature* as otherwiſe framed and inclined. Chriſtianity was not intended to deſtroy any one principle truly na-

natural, but refine and improve every principle and inclination of this kind. Let men have *humanity* at their converſion, and there is no great danger of their loſing it afterwards. *Evangelical virtue* is one of the moſt ſociable things in the whole world; as appears from this ſingle conſideration, that it hath none of the ſeeds of animoſity and diviſion in it, which vice abounds with. We may call it *the univerſal magnetiſm of minds* that are in their proper and moſt natural ſtate, or that ſecret quality by which they draw and embrace each other. The idea the ſcripture gives us of heaven is that of a ſociety of pure and happy ſpirits; and tho' it is certain that none of our ſocieties here upon earth can compare with that perfect model, yet no one ought therefore to renounce them any more than to renounce the thoughts of geting *Wiſdom* and *Grace*, becauſe, after all he can do, his attainments in both will be very incomplete. By ſecluding himſelf from human converſe, a man will but get himſelf an ill name without meeting in his retreat with any thing that will make him amends for it. It is well, if he be not aſſaulted with temptations, which will be the more dangerous as they find him alone. There is ſomething in the preſence and company of Chriſtian friends that cheers and enlivens the heart, helps a man to throw off any load that may hang upon his ſpirits, and diſpoſeth

poſeth him to travel on in the journey of life, and in his chriſtian courſe, with more ſpeed and alacrity. At worſt, they that are fond of the life of hermits, and neither care to give or receive neighbourly and chriſtian viſits, having no proſpect, as they think, of bettering themſelves by them, ſhould yet vouchſafe to aſſociate with others, in order to better them, and reſtore converſation to its proper uſe and deſign.

I would not be miſtaken, and therefore add, that much company, or company ill-choſen, is worſe than none. When people are fond of cultivating a large acquaintance, perpetually taken up in entertaining or being entertained, in collecting and retailing news, rambling from place to place, from company to company, pleaſed to be any where rather than at home, imployed about any thing rather than in the buſineſs to which they are called, and to converſe with any perſons rather than themſelves; not to mention the effect this muſt have on their temporal affairs, it is next to impoſſible they ſhould improve in their knowledge of God and their own hearts; or that the other world ſhould gain upon their affections, when their time is almoſt all devoured by the pleaſures and avocations of this. And the conſequence is not leſs fatal from a wrong choice of company; when the vain, the looſe, the irreligious are, merely for their wit

wit and humour, prefered to the wife and ſober. If a man carries any ſenſe of Religion, and reliſh of its pleaſures, into ſuch converſation, it will not be long before he loſes it; for *he that walketh with wiſe men ſhall be wiſe, but a companion of fools ſhall be deſtroyed.*

2. It is a virtue of ſociety to be *affable*, and *courteous*; and ſo is it of Chriſtianity too, [a] *be pitiful, be courteous.* And conſequently, a ſupercilious haughtineſs and ſtiffneſs of carriage, beſides its diſqualifying a man for ſociety, muſt argue him not to be ſo compleat a Chriſtian as he ſhould be. Allowance muſt be made for temper, and inclination. In ſome, nature is more ſmooth and ductile; in others, more rough and unpoliſhed. Creatures of different kinds ſcarce differ more remarkably from one another, in this reſpect, while this is ſtately and ſullen, that tractable and gentle, than men do, though of the ſame ſpecies. However, though this may ſometimes extenuate the matter, it will not amount to a juſtification. Other animals muſt retain the marks and characters which nature hath ſeverally ſtamped upon them; nor are they anſwerable for any of their imperfections, becauſe they cannot help them; while man hath ſo much power over his own mind, that he can, if he heartily endeavours it, cure himſelf of many of his infirmities; and, in lower inſtances

[a] 1 Pet. iii. 8.

ſtances, either alter or improve his nature. In lower inſtances I ſay; as to which, by watchfulneſs over himſelf, and propoſing ſuch examples as are worthy of his imitation, he may, with time and cuſtom, ſuperinduce another nature more perfect than that which he brought into the world with him; as, by the *Grace* of God, ſuch a change may be wrought upon him, as ſhall reſtore the image of God on his ſoul, and transform him into a new creature. Hear the Apoſtle's advice to the *Romans*, [b] *Be of the ſame mind one towards another*; *mind not high things*, *but condeſcend to men of low eſtate*; *be not wiſe in your own conceit.* That part of the advice, which more immediately falls in under this particular, is that condeſcending behaviour which he recommends to them: and it is obſervable how he places it; juſt before is the precept, *not to mind high things*; juſt after, *not to be wiſe in our own conceit.* Which may probably intimate to us the root and original of an imperious lofty temper. Men either *mind high things*, and ſo do not regard thoſe below them; or, *being wiſe in their own conceit*, they diſdain them.

He that would be affable muſt be humble. By *affability* I mean a man's being free and open to his equals, and civil and obliging to the meaneſt of his inferiors; not ſour and moroſe, not taking ſtate upon him,

[b] Rom. xii. 16.

him, not carrying it as if he did not ſee or hear them, or thought it a diſparagement to beſtow a look or a word upon them; like thoſe of old, who fancied they ſhould be defiled by mixing with the vulgar, to whom in their pride they would ſay---*Stand off, for I am holier than thou*---ſo theſe, Stand off, for I have more ſenſe, or wealth, or power than you have. Such a carriage is diſpleaſing in all, but doubly ſo in perſons of a religious character; who, being the diſciples of a meek and lowly Jeſus, give great offence to the world, when they ſhew themſelves in a guiſe ſo unlike their Maſter. An unaffected ſweetneſs and civility of geſture and converſation, as it will cover great faults, ſo it will beautify and ſet off the meaneſt virtues, and render thoſe that are truly great more eminently bright and conſpicuous. When the maſter of a family, and ſuch as bear the greateſt ſway in a neighbourhood, are good men, and withal kind and gentle and eaſy of acceſs, it wonderfully endears them to thoſe in an inferior rank, and adds a much greater weight to their counſels, their reproofs, and examples. I need not add, if ſuperiors ſhould not be haughty and over-bearing to thoſe below them, inferiors ſhould not be rude and ill-mannered to thoſe above them; both theſe have a tincture of the ſame bad principle of pride and conceit; a quality which no advantage of fortune,

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no ſuperiority of gifts or ſtation, will obtain pardon for; but is moſt offenſive in perſons of a mean and indigent condition. And when ſuch as theſe who ſhew that they neither underſtand themſelves, nor the rules of Chriſtianity, as they ſhould, and have no regard to the diſtinction which Providence hath ſeen fit to make between men, ſhall ſet up for ſomething extraordinary in the Church of God, it is well if a part of that diſpleaſure, which ſtanders-by muſt conceive againſt them, doth not fall upon their profeſſion.

3. Another ſocial virtue, and a great ornament to Religion, is *a readineſs to put the beſt conſtruction upon the actions of others*; oppoſite to which is *cenſorioufneſs*; which I have been grieved to hear ſo often laid to the charge of religious people. I am perſuaded the matter is not ſo bad as the world repreſents it, who frequently call every ſignification of a man's diſlike of the moſt open and ſcandalous faults by the name of *cenſorioufneſs*. But ſtill, I doubt, the accuſation, though itſelf cenſorious in the main, is not without all ground. It is not the part of a good man to hunt after faults, eſpecially when they come not within his province to note and correct. To judge *raſhly* is but one remove from judging *falſely*. If the action hath a doubtful appearance, *charity*, which *thinketh no evil*, will incline

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to the more favourable ſide. The Chriſtian ſhould not love to rake into the characters of others, but leave ſuch dirty work to more proper hands, as a perſon well-bred would cleaning of the publick ſtreets. He ſhould not have his ear open to receive ill reports, much leſs his mouth to repeat them. Surely, no good man can delight in the ſins and miſcarriages of others; it is no ſign or part, of his goodneſs, if he does; but a blot, and a reproach to him, that he ſhould be guilty of that which a good-natured man, with very little other goodneſs in him, would abhor. And what a man doth not delight in how can he be fond to hear?

It is a barbarous cuſtom, but too common, for people, when they are met together, to ſit down and divert themſelves with worrying the reputation of their neighbours; this is ſomewhat like the *heathen* cuſtom of expoſing men to the fury of wild beaſts for the entertainment of the ſpectators. Perſons of any judgment and knowledge can find other ways of ſpending their time, at once more innocent and inſtructive; and much more may Chriſtians, who ſhould rather take the part of advocates, where the caſe will admit of it, and repreſent both perſons and actions in the beſt light they will bear; ſhewing themſelves herein not unacquainted with that part of the deſcription of *charity*, that it *believeth all things.*

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Prudence will reſtrain a wiſe man from making free with other mens good names, and *humanity* an ingenuous good-tempered man; and ſhould not *charity* and *conſcience* reſtrain the religious man? Hath he not ſins of his own to mortify, and to confeſs and be humble for before God? And do not the ſins of other men, where they come to his knowledge, challenge his compaſſion [c] for the guilty? I ſhall conclude with thoſe words of the Apoſtle, which are better known than practiſed, [d] *Put them in mind to ſpeak evil of no man.* Speak evil of no man, and hardly any man will ſpeak evil of you; this at leaſt is the ſureſt way not to have your *good evil ſpoken of.*

4. A *compliant behaviour* in innocent things is what every Chriſtian ſhould ſtudy, both as a member of religious, and civil ſociety. If every man will needs adhere to his own humour, and not be contented unleſs his way be followed, and his opinion take place, what agreement, or harmony can be expected? What endleſs diſputes muſt enſue? One man having the ſame right to inſiſt on his fancy, as another upon his. And thus, inſtead of joining amicably in purſuit of thoſe ends for which they enter into ſociety, they will ſpend a great part of their time and zeal in contending for ſuperiority one over another. Suppoſing

[c] 1 Pet. iii. 8. Jude 22. [d] Tit. iii. 2.

a man to be wiſer than others of the ſame community, and that he hath a righter notion of ſome things, yet it is no part of his wiſdom to oppoſe his ſingle judgment to the general ſuffrage, and to go in a path by himſelf. For why ſhould a man be needleſly ſingular, and draw on himſelf the imputation of pride, when he might avoid it? It is the moſt prudent way to bend, where a man lawfully may, and to ſubmit to the common deciſion. Perhaps, the majority err in their choice; perhaps, rules, and modes, and cuſtoms might be thought on more expedient than thoſe which are moſt prevailing, and have the publick vote; at leaſt I fancy ſo. But what then? Shall I ſet up my judgment for the common ſtandard? And think to give laws to the greater number? It is the Apoſtle's advice, that we [e] *ſubmit ourſelves one to another.* And ſince in every ſociety this is abſolutely neceſſary, that ſome ſhould ſubmit to others, (ſince it is much if they have all to a man the ſame notions of things) which is fitteſt, that one or two ſhould ſubmit to a much greater number, or the much greater number to one or two? I hope there is no need of my telling you that I reſtrain this compliance to things *lawful* or *indifferent*; not extending it to matters where *conſcience* interpoſeth, whoſe authority is always greater than

[e] Eph. v. 21.

than that of any number or cuſtom whatſoever.

Daniel ſeems at firſt ſight to have been guilty of an affected ſingularity, when he refuſes to take *the portion of meat and drink* which the King had *appointed him.* But the excuſe which he made for his refuſal, that he ſhould hereby [f] *defile himſelf*, was not a mere pretence to hide his ill-humour and obſtinacy, but a very ſubſtantial one, proceeding on this ground, that it was the cuſtom with theſe nations to throw a part of the bread and wine on the altar; or, if they had no altar at hand, upon the fire or the hearth, inſtead of an altar, and that way to conſecrate to their Gods the whole of what they ſhould eat *. It was for this reaſon that he reckoned the meat was defiled, and that he himſelf ſhould be ſo by eating it; it being a partaking with idols. Now I have mentioned this cuſtom of the *Heathens*, methinks I would make one uſe of it, though a little out of my way, and that is, to reprove thoſe who go under the name of *Chriſtians*, and yet ſit down to their meals, aud riſe up again, without beging a bleſſing upon what they are to receive, or returning thanks for what the bountiful hand of Providence hath given them. The miſtaken piety of *Heathens*, who thus acknowledged their falſe gods at

[f] Dan. i. 8. * Grot. in loc.

their tables, is a ſevere repremand to *Chriſtians* for their neglect of the true God. Near akin to this laſt is

5. *Peaceableneſs*, a virtue of ſociety, which no Chriſtian ſhould be defective in, or can be ſo, without injury to Religion. We are charged, [g] *If it be poſſible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men.* [h] *To make ſupplications, prayers, and interceſſions for all men*, more eſpecially *for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty.* Now it would be very odd, for the ſame men to pray for the publick peace, and at the ſame time to break it by an unquiet turbulent behaviour, or by ſeditious words and practices, *ſpeaking evil of dignities*, and doing things which they know to be offenſive to the higher powers. Chriſtians, in their ſeveral places, ſhould [i] *ſtudy to be quiet, and to do their own buſineſs*; that they may not [k] *ſuffer as buſy-bodies in other mens matters*; endeavouring to promote peace, as far as they have any influence in families, or neighbourhood, or greater communities; not given to emulations, wrath, ſtrife, contention, which are all of them [l] *works of the fleſh*; not quarrelſome and litigious, but, for peace ſake, receding from what they are perſuaded

[g] Rom. xii. 18. [h] 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. [i] 1 Theſ. iv. 11. [k] 1 Pet. iv. 15. [l] Gal. v. 20.

ſuaded is their right in leſſer things; of which we have an example in [m] *Abraham*, who, though he was *Lot*'s uncle, and, in that relation, had a juſt claim to the precedency, yet to prevent all ſtrife between himſelf and his nephew, and between their herdſmen, lets him have the firſt choice where to ſettle in the land. And thus a greater than *Abraham*, I mean our bleſſed Lord, though not obliged to pay tribute for the ſervice of the temple, would yet do it, to avoid [n] *giving offence*. It is obſerved of *the wiſdom that is from above*, that it is not only *pure* but *peaceable*. We are therefore to be peaceable as well as pure; and the rather, becauſe peaceableneſs is a point of heavenly wiſdom. A peaceable demeanour gains us the eſteem and affection of thoſe that know us, reflects an honour on our profeſſion, and puts us into a capacity of ſerving the cauſe we are embarked in better than we could otherwiſe do. To add but one particular more,

6. The virtue that, above all others, makes any ſociety flouriſh, is *benevolence* or good-will. This virtue, which we commonly call *humanity*, is a principal part of Chriſtianity too. There is no other Religion ſo fited to inſpire and cheriſh this excellent temper, as the Goſpel of our Saviour, by its Principles, its Precepts, and Examples.

[m] Gen. xiii. 9. [n] Mat. xvii. 27.

In praiſe of *benevolence* we may obſerve, that a perſon of this temper is emphatically ſtyled * *the good man*, ° *for whom*, it is ſuppoſed, there are *ſome* to be found, who *would even dare to die.* We meet with the ſame title explained after the ſame manner in *Xenophon* ‡, who tells us, that *Cyrus*, was called by thoſe, whom he had ſuccoured and befriended, *the benefactor*, *the good man.* Remember this, that *the good man*, by way of eminence, is the man of kind and friendly inclinations, the lover of his ſpecies, who hath a hearty concern for the welfare of all, and ſhuns no opportunities, that offer, of promoting it; whoſe breaſt is filled with none but affections of the beſt and nobleſt kind, ſuch as love, and thoſe other paſſions that branch out of it. Hatred he is a ſtranger to; he hath diſcarded envy, ill-nature, and revenge; he allows them not any room in his heart; and, if he feels ſome ſudden motions of them on certain occaſions, (as what man is there exempted from all ſuch?) he ſtifles and ſuppreſſes them; and will not ſuffer them to break forth into

* Υπερ τε αγαθε for *the* good man; not for *a* good man, as we have tranſlated it, becauſe it would probably then have been without the article, as υπερ δικαιε is in the ſame verſe.

° Rom. v. 7.

‡ *Cyri Inſtitut. lib.* 3. ανακαλεντες τον ευεργετην, τον ανδρα τον αγαθον. This place gives great light to that of the Apoſtle juſt mentioned, and the uſing the article in both is very remarkable.

into his life, and distort and pervert the actions of that. This is the man, who, if there was occasion, would be most likely to have others at his service, not in a complement only, but in a time of need, ready to share his dangers, and shield his life with the hazard of their own.

A man can be no Christian that is not in some measure thus inclined; *charity* being one of the chief ingredients in a truly christian temper, the main feature in the image of the Son of God, to which we are to be conformed; which, it were to be wished, some men would better consider, who seem to have made up a Christianity to themselves in which love hath no share, a Christianity that hath no heat or life belonging to it, but what it borrows from a bitter uncharitable zeal. The professors of the Gospel should be eminent in this virtue. Their charity should shine before men, like the light of the sun in the property of being unconfined; but as to its cheering and agreeable nature more like that of the heavenly city, *which hath no need of the sun, or of the moon, to shine in it, because the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Their hearts should melt in tenderness and compassion, diffuse themselves abroad in good wishes, and be continually prompting them to acts of kindness and beneficence. They should

congratulate, not envy, another's prosperity; and condole, not rejoice, in his calamities; be quick to do a good office, and as slow to resent a bad one done to themselves. Nor must their *benevolence* be bounded within their own party, which is a *Jewish* not *Christian* charity, but take the widest scope. Was this godlike disposition more conspicuous in the generality of Christians, what an honour would it be both to the Master, and to the disciples! And how would every one be persuaded to believe that Religion was a good thing, when they saw it to have so good an effect on the professors of it, to render them kind, and amicable, and useful!

I have now gone through the *first thing* proposed, which was to explain and open the duty of taking care that *our good be not evil spoken of*; both as it relates to Christians in general, and in a more particular manner to those, who, in the judgment of charity, are really such.

I shall now proceed,

II. To prove and enforce the doctrine by some proper considerations. And that it is our duty and concern to exercise the greatest care and caution in this matter is easily shewn.

1. The

1. The firſt conſideration ſhall be taken from the world we live in. The people of the world look with an ill eye upon the people of God; almoſt all the cauſes of enmity concur that can ſet two people at variance, ſuch as difference of language, of maxims and opinions, of genius and inclinations, of manners and intereſts. Hence the enmity between the ſeed of the woman and the ſeed of the ſerpent is the moſt irreconcileable of any; being founded, beſides a contrariety of cuſtoms, in an oppoſition of natures too. Our Saviour hath inſtructed his diſciples what they are to expect from the world, telling them that [p] *if they were of the world, the world would love them, but becauſe they were not of the world, but he had choſen them out of the world, therefore the world hated them.* Now every diſciple of Chriſt ſhould make it his buſineſs to behave himſelf ſo prudently, and irreproachably, that the world, how much ſoever it hates them, may have no ground to deſpiſe them, nor any excuſe for its hatred; [q] *having a good conſcience, that whereas* ill men would be glad to *ſpeak evil of them as of evil doers, they may be aſhamed that falſely accuſe their good converſation in Chriſt.*

Jeremiah's complaint of ſome in his time, that they [r] *watched for his halting*, is verified of

[p] John. xv. 19. [q] 1 Pet. iii. 16. [r] Jer. xx. 10.

of good men in every age more or leſs; who, upon that very account, ſhould walk the more circumſpectly, giving no occaſion to the adverſary to ſpeak reproachfully. Perſons that travel in the narrow way ſhould call to mind, that, beſides the all-ſeeing God, a great many others have their eye upon them; who will not pity their failings, and make allowances for them as God will, but ſeverely remark every little error, and repreſent it as criminal, or ridiculous. The moſt commendable way of revenge in this caſe is to diſappoint them; and by a diſcreet, wining, inoffenſive behaviour, to ſtop their mouths, if we cannot change their hearts. And it is ſome incouragement, that the caſe of true Chriſtians at preſent is not altogether ſo bad as that of Chriſt's firſt diſciples, who living among men of another Religion, were hated and perſecuted the more on that ſcore; whereas we are all of us, or all to a few, Chriſtians by profeſſion; and, tho' unhappily diſtinguiſhed by different denominations, which have produced too great an alineation of affections on all ſides, yet the two moſt oppoſite parties among us are thoſe of good men and bad; and the bad, being outwardly of the ſame Religion as the good, cannot, for ſhame, be ſo free to cenſure them for their exactneſs in walking according to their common rule. And, beſides this, if we conſider Religion under the three heads, of duties relating to *God*,

God, to our *neighbour*, and to *ourſelves*, we ſhall find that the godly are hardly more hated for their ſtrictneſs in thoſe of the firſt and the laſt claſs, that is, for their ſpirituality, their devotion, their watchfulneſs and circumſpection, their purity, mortification and ſelf-denial, than they are praiſed and approved for their juſtice and charity, their kindneſs and liberality, their modeſty and ſincerity, and all the other virtues that ſhew their good-will towards men. And that, for the ſake of theſe latter, the graces which wicked men are no friends to, meet with a more favourable reception than they would otherwiſe do. [f] *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* There is a ſecret charm in goodneſs and piety, when attended with good-nature, and an agreeable converſation, that diſarms envy and malice, poſſeſſes itſelf of the eſteem of bad men, if they are not very bad indeed, and unites the good, tho' of different perſuaſions in leſſer things, in love to one another. The mutual ſhineſs and diſaffection among true Chriſtians of different parties, and their undervaluing thoughts of one another, are moſt commonly owing to ſome of thoſe imperfections before-mentioned; which, like repelling qualities, hinder that cloſe and ſtrong conjunction, which the ſpirit of unity tends to produce in the chriſtian world.

At

[f] 1 Pet. iii. 13.

At worſt, if we ſhould ſuffer in our good name or otherwiſe, we ſhall be happy in this, that we *ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake*, as the ſame Apoſtle adds in the next verſe. It will be a ſatisfaction that we have not by our own folly and miſmanagement given a handle for ſuch treatment.

2. Out of regard to Religion we ſhould be mindful of the ſame thing. Every Chriſtian is in a lower ſenſe entruſted with the Goſpel of Chriſt, it is a *depoſitum* committed to his charge; and he is to keep it with the utmoſt care, both its doctrines, and its precepts; to be tender of its reputation, and reſolved to watch againſt every thing that tends to its diſcredit. It muſt be ſuppoſed too, that all who have experienced the power of Religion, have a ſuperlative affection for it; that they put the higheſt value on the Goſpel which contains ſuch ineſtimable promiſes, and hath produced ſuch bleſſed effects in themſelves. And how then can they be indifferent to what concerns the honour and intereſt of their holy Religion? Or be negligent of their behaviour, when the credit of the Goſpel depends ſo much upon it? It is impoſſible any ſincerely pious man ſhould be wholly indifferent to the one, or negligent of the other. But there is ſomething more required of us than barely our not being *indifferent* to the intereſt of Religion, and that is, that we be zealouſly affected towards it, quick

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to ſpy, and as careful to avoid every thing that may prejudice ſo good a cauſe; as it is certain we ſhall be, if we eſteem and love our Religion in any degree proportionable to what it deſerves from us.

3. We are all bound to deſire and endeavour the ſalvation of others. Nor can any one, that is himſelf in a converted ſtate, be unconcerned about the converſion, and ſpiritual, as well as temporal, happineſs of others. This being ſo, for the ſame reaſon that we are obliged to pray for others, and to ſeek their ſpiritual and everlaſting good, we muſt be obliged to uſe the moſt proper means to this end; to beware of every thing that may tend to harden them in ſin, and prevent their return to God, and to practiſe all thoſe things whereby we may one awaken, and edify, another, may conquer the ſinner's prejudices, and bring him to have other thoughts of the ways of piety. Shall we *deſtroy thoſe for whom Chriſt died?* There is no true Chriſtian would willingly and deliberately do this; there is no ſuch perſon but abhors the thought of it. But let us, my friends, conſider, that we may do this without intending it, yea at the ſame time that we intend the contrary, by not being ſo watchful over our conduct as is needful. We are not only to regard our actions as to the ſubſtance of them, but as to their appearance and circumſtances; and to order theſe ſo, as that by the beauty of holi-

holineſs, and the force of a commanding example, we may obtain enterance for the truth into the hearts of men.

4. A ſenſe of our duty to God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, ſhould perſuade us to the ſame care. Hath the *kindneſs and love of God appeared in ſaving us, not by works of righteouſneſs, which we have done, but of his own free grace and mercy?* Hath he tranſlated us from the moſt miſerable into the happieſt of all conditions? And can I otherwiſe than love, and praiſe, and magnify his name? Or, if I love him as I profeſs to do, and as his benefits require, can I chuſe but be jealous for his honour, and do my utmoſt to promote his intereſt among men? Now in order to this our Lord hath told us, that [t] *our light ſhould ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven.* You ſee the glory of God is inſeparable from that of Religion; that of Religion depends very much on the repreſentation we make of it in our lives. God hath ſaid, that he will be [u] *glorified before all the people*; and we can do this no way more effectually than by an example of uniform goodneſs, and amiable piety? Then would not the name of God, or that other worthy name, whereby we are called, be blaſphemed; the doctrine of our Saviour would approve itſelf to the very ſenſes of men, when they beheld

[t] Mat. v. 16. [u] Lev. x. 3.

beheld it ſhining in our converſations unclouded by great and avoidable infirmities. O what a tender, what a vigilant concern ſhould we have for the honour of our Redeemer; to whom we are ſo infinitely indebted, and from whom we have received ſuch proofs of an unparalled affection! When any duty is preſſed upon us for *Chriſt*'s ſake, as in that inſtance 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 1. *Furthermore then we beſeech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jeſus, that as ye have received how you ought to walk, and to pleaſe God, ſo you would abound more and more*; when, I ſay, any duty is urged upon us in this form, the argument ſhould never fail of making a very ſtrong and laſting impreſſion upon us. *By the Lord Jeſus*, that is, by the love of Jeſus to the children of men, in becoming man, and doing and ſuffering ſo much for their ſalvation, which we pretend to admire and celebrate as ſurpaſſing all example; as alſo by the love which we make profeſſion of to Jeſus, we ſhould be perſuaded and taught to do this and that, in order to make him the beſt return we are able for his love, and to give the moſt convincing proof and demonſtration of our own. Once more,

5. I might argue from the obligation we are all under to endeavour after perfection. [w] *Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.* [x] *That ye may be perfect and entire, lacking*

[w] Mat. v. 48. [x] Jam. i. 4.

lacking nothing. [y] *Be watchful, and ſtrengthen the things that remain, and are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.* To perfect our works, it is not enough that no eſſential part be wanting, but there ſhould be every thing that is requiſite to add a grace and a comelineſs to them, what may ſhew the ſtrength of the principle from which they proceed, and be a kind of poliſhing to them in the ſight of men. The former indeed, or the eſſential part, is all the perfection neceſſary to entitle them to the goſpel-reward. But ſhall we do no more than juſt what is abſolutely neceſſary to ſave us? They who are ſo frugal in Religion, and think it their wiſdom to act here, as in purchaſing worldly things, which they get at as low rates as they can, ſhew themſelves to be wretchedly ignorant of the things of God. The truly good man will not *think himſelf to have already attained, or that he is already perfect; but forgeting the things that are behind, will be preſſing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt.* He will labour after what he knows to belong to chriſtian perfection, in the largeſt extent of that word. I add, that it is his duty to labour more fervently than the greater part of Chriſtians do, and to ſtudy to know what that perfection is; that, having a clearer idea of it, he may be able to exhibit

[y] Rev. iii. 2.

hibit a fairer and more complete copy of it in his own converſation. I acknowledge there may be ſometimes greater degrees of real, inward perfection, where the outward example is not ſo engageing; yet ſtill, ſo far the example is imperfect; and, which muſt not be omitted, the greateſt height and vigour of real Religion, that is, of love to God and man, is on ſuppoſition of an equality in other reſpects, always attended with the greateſt decorum and lovelineſs of the external demeanour. A defect therefore muſt certainly lie ſomewhere, either in the underſtanding, or natural temper, or education and principles, of the Chriſtian; or, if not in theſe, in his graces, as often as he gives occaſion, by ſomething or other in his conduct, for *his good to be evil ſpoken of.*

All that remains is the *Application* of this point; upon which I ſhall be the ſhorter, ſince what I have already offered hath been almoſt wholly practical.

1. I ſhall apply what hath been ſaid more generally. We all bear the chriſtian name, and, I hope, are inwardly perſuaded of the truth of that Religion which we profeſs. We believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God; that both Chriſt and his Doctrine came down from heaven; we ſhould not be willing to exchange our Religion for any other;

we look on it as the way of life, and truſt to obtain ſalvation by it. In all this we do well, provided we do not ſtop here, and act an inconſiſtent part; in words own Chriſt, and in works deny him; lay hold of the promiſe and neglect the condition; profeſs a pure, undefiled Religion, and lead corrupt and wicked lives. Let me entreat ſuch, as do thus, not to go on expoſing Religion, and themſelves too, after this manner. Let me beg them to reflect, what a deal of miſchief they do the cauſe which they pretend to liſt in the defence of; and how great their folly is to expect to be ſaved by a Religion, the credit of which they are daily undermining by their evil examples. Let them remember this, and ſhew themſelves men. They are reaſonable creatures, and able to diſcern an abſurdity and contradiction in the common conduct of life. And how is it they cannot do the ſame in matters of a higher nature, and more important conſequence? Can there be a more glaring abſurdity than to make their boaſt of the *Goſpel*, as the *Jew* formerly did of the *Law*, when they live in perpetual contradiction to it, and do all that lies in them to make it appear contemptible in the eyes of the world? Their guilt in *ſining wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth*, and ſaying to Chriſt, *Hail, Maſter, and kiſſing him*, while they betray, and crucify him, is not little; nor will

will their punishment be less than their guilt, if they do not unfeignedly repent, and forsake the way of destruction they are now in.

2. As for those that are real as well as nominal Christians, of them it may, in a particular manner, be expected, that they should listen to the advice that hath been offered them, since they must own it to be founded in Reason and Scripture; and they have that within them which must incline them to their duty, of which they are persuaded. They should *walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise*; humbly beg of God to guide them in the right way; and make use of that wisdom, which hath been given them from a above, to regulate their behaviour in the minuter parts of it, to the end there may be nothing wanting in their example to give it its proper evidence and success. If it be objected, that some of the instances before recommended to the Christian's care are of a trivial nature, and not worth regarding, (as I am apprehensive some may be ready to imagine) I take leave to answer, that in Religion nothing is *truly little*, not even those things which are of inconsiderable moment, when viewed abstractedly, in their own nature, or compared with some others. For as soon as they affect Religion, and make a part of that, or are connected with

what is ſo, they change their rank, tho' not their nature, and become great and weighty.

All things are not of the ſame importance; it is true, all things are not alike neceſſary to ſalvation, but all things that have a manifeſt influence on the ſalvation of others, or on our own greater progreſs and perfection, challenge our ſerious notice. There are the *conſtituent* parts of Religion, and others that we may call *ornamental.* Every one will confeſs, that the former are to be looked to in the firſt place. But will any one think this to be a good reaſon for ſlighting the ſecond? One may be compared to the ſtuff of which the garment is made, the other to the ſhape, and trimming; the two latter of which are never entirely diſregarded by thoſe who would be thought moſt indifferent and mortified in their habit. Were we concerned for no more in our clothes, than juſt to cover our bodies, and keep them warm, there would be no need of troubling ourſelves about the fineneſs, or colour, or faſhion of them; nor any foundation for prefering one to another, in moſt caſes. Now if this would be carrying things to an extreme, (as all acknowledge it would by their practice, which ſhews them to have an eye to *decency*, as well as *neceſſity*, or *covenience*) why ſhould we run into an extreme like this in Religion, conſulting only what is of the eſſence of it, or but one remove from eſſential, and over-

overlooking what might be ornamental to it, and ſet it off to greater advantage? In our houſes, and in the appearance we make abroad in the world, we chooſe what we account moſt fit and becoming; we are not contented to have all things neceſſary for uſe, but we would have them clean, and neat, and in their proper place and order. And, for certain, we ſhould not be more careleſs in our conduct, as it any way relates, tho' but indirectly, to the things of God, and our ſouls; eſpecially, when we attend to the conſequence of our neglect in this caſe. Were the things themſelves as mean and trifling in their own nature, as ſome may conceive them, yet ſince they draw ſuch conſequences after them, ſince we are like to be more or leſs uſeful, as we obſerve or deſpiſe them, ſince by guarding againſt little blemiſhes, and defects, and indiſcretions, we ſave our Religion from contempt, and prepare the way for the converſion, and eſtabliſhment of our neighbour, which, by a contrary management, we ſhould hinder; I think, it evidently follows, that ſuch rules and directions as thoſe before given are not below any one's obſervation. After the actions themſelves, the conſequences of them are to be weighed. And herein it is, that the prudent man differs from another; that he looks before him, and around him, and provides againſt the *appearance of evil* in himſelf,

ſelf, becauſe of thoſe *real evils* that may follow in reſpect of others. Whatever truth there may be in that *Jewiſh* proverb, "that "the chief things which will undo the "world are the follies of religious men," he would not willingly countenance and make it good by his own inadvertency and miſconduct.

I ſhall conclude with a word or two to thoſe, who, from the infirmities and failings of chriſtian profeſſors, take occaſion to *ſpeak evil* of that which is *good*. This practice is very unreaſonable, very unjuſt, and very wicked.

It is very *unreaſonable* and *fooliſh* not to diſtinguiſh between good and bad, but to confound them in our cenſure, and reject that which is good, becauſe it is not abſolutely pure and unmixed, What if there be ſome *failings* that accompany real goodneſs? That which was really good before continues ſo notwithſtanding this union. Gold does not ceaſe to be gold, becauſe it is mixed with ſome droſs; nor is the quantity or value of it ever the leſs in itſelf; as will appear the moment we come to ſeparate them. In other caſes we do not think the worſe of valuable qualities and attainments for their being ſometimes found in conjunction with great imperfections. It is not made an objection againſt *knowledge*, that the moſt knowing men are not always

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the beſt-natured, or moſt virtuous; but we can tell how to value ſkill in any profeſſion and are glad to make uſe of it, how unhappily ſoever it be matched. And why muſt Religion alone meet with ſuch hard and unequal uſage, for no other reaſon, but that we find in the votaries of it ſome things which were better wanting?

Such proceeding is *unjuſt*, as well as *unreaſonable*. There is a great deal of injuſtice to the *religious perſon*, who, governing himſelf in the main of his behaviour by the principles of reaſon and conſcience, deſerves our eſteem, in ſpite of ſome little imperfections, which are by far too light to weigh down his many virtues. Such a one, with all his defects, makes a character greatly ſuperior to any man's, that is complaiſant, frank, liberal, diſcreet, and every thing but religious; and much more then to theirs, who are little leſs wanting in *civil* and *moral*, than in *religious* accompliſhments; which deſcribes the greater number of thoſe who are moſt ſevere and witty on the ſlips and weakneſſes of good men. The injuſtice to *Religion* is yet greater than to the *religious*, in loading it with the imperfections of thoſe that profeſs it; which whatever they are, they brought over with them from their former ſtate; which, moreover, Religion doth not allow of, but reprove and condemn, and, if permitted to

have its perfect work, would quickly correct. As far as any man frames his temper and way of life by the rules of Religion, there is nothing in it that can justly offend and displease; what there is of this kind proceeds not from Religion, but from the want of it, or from natural temper, incapacity, and human weakness, false notions, ill habits contracted before conversion, *&c.* and is therefore very unjustly made use of to traduce and disgrace Religion. But why does not Religion cure men of all these weaknesses and distempers? Not because the Principles of Religion, and the Grace of God are unactive, impotent things, but because they work not, as it is not fit they should, without our concurrence.

Finally; this method of dealing with Religion is extremely *profane* and *wicked*, being an affront to God himself, whose image and institution it is; his *institution*, as it is contained in the holy scriptures; his *image*, as exemplified in the renewed soul. What saith our blessed Saviour to his disciples? *He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* The contempt of Religion is really a contempt of God, who is the supreme fountain and author of it; the reproaches of them that reproach it fall on him; and he will not hold them guiltless, who offer him such indignities. Nay, though it could be suppos-

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ed that wicked men confined their mockery to the *perſons* of the godly, without making a jeſt immediately of godlineſs itſelf, yet will not God leave them unpuniſhed; both for the ſake of the righteous, whoſe characters, as ſupreme governor and judge of the world, he is concerned to vindicate, one time or other; and for his own, whoſe image and likeneſs, delineated upon them, ought to be reſpected, though done in none of the brighteſt colours, and ſet in an indifferent frame. To treat this divine image after a different manner ſhews a root of bitterneſs within, and that men hate God and Religion, though they dare not openly avow it.

A

SERMON

Concerning the NATURE of

Chriſt's Kingdom

Chiefly deſigned againſt the

Corruptions and *Uſurpations*

OF THE

CHURCH of *ROME.*

PREACHED to an

ASSEMBLY *of* MINISTERS,

At *Sherbourn* in *Dorſetſhire,*

APRIL 8, 1735.

SERMON IV.

On the Nature of CHRIST's Kingdom.

JOHN. XVIII. 17.

My Kingdom is not of this World.

MANY ages before the Meſſiah appeared among men, it was foretold that he ſhould be a King. The Prophets beheld him in Viſion ſiting upon the throne of his glory, and rejoiced in the diſtant proſpect. One of them, particularly, deſcribes him under the familiar name of [a] *the Son of Man*, coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days, by whom was given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations, and languages ſhould ſerve him; that his dominion ſhould be an everlaſting dominion, and his kingdom that which ſhould not be deſtroyed.

At

[a] Dan. vii. 13, 14.

At length *the fulneſs of time is come*; this wonderful Perſon, *the Word*, is made Fleſh; wiſe men from the *Eaſt* come to *Jeruſalem*, ſaying, *Where is he that was born King of the Jews?* He challenges the character of the *Meſſiah*, and, by conſequence, the ſtyle of Univerſal King included in it. The multitude rightly judging by his miracles, that he was *Meſſiah the Prince*, would have taken him by force, and made him a King; they were in haſte to proclaim his title, and fight under his banner. But the doctrine he taught, and his manner of life, were ſo very oppoſite to the views and intereſts of the *Phariſees*, and other leading men among the *Jews*, that they became his bittereſt enemies; and for no other reaſon, but becauſe he would not ſet up a temporal Kingdom, accuſed him to the Roman Governor of deſigning it. [b] *If thou let this man go, thou art no friend to Cæſar; whoſoever maketh himſelf a King, ſpeaketh againſt Cæſar.* Whereby they would inſinuate, that *Jeſus Chriſt* invaded the rights of the Emperor of *Rome*; an accuſation the more inexcuſably malicious (not only for that his whole life was a plain confutation of this charge, and he had ever taught them, *to render unto Cæſar the things that were Cæſar's* but) becauſe he had, but a little before, in this very trial, told *Pilate*, who aſked him whether he was *King of the Jews*, that *his King-*

[b] John xix. 12.

Kingdom was not of this World. He does not disown his being a King; but, when *Pilate* repeats the question *(art thou a King then?)* answers, *thou sayest that I am a King*; which is a more indirect way of asserting that he was so; especially when he adds, that *for this end he came into the world, that he might bear witness to the Truth*; intimating that it is not only a Truth that *Jesus* is a King, but one of those Truths that lie at the foundation of the Christian Religion. Yet still, that they might not mistake him, the nature of his Kingdom is sufficiently explained in these words, *My Kingdom is not of this World.* Here I shall,

I. Give some account of the Kingly Power of our Lord. And then,
II. Proceed to explain and prove this declaration concerning his Kingdom in the Text, *that is is not of this World.*

I. It may be proper to give some account, tho' short, of *Christ*'s Kingly Power. A Kingdom is a society of reasonable Beings united under the government of one supreme head. Such a Kingdom is the Church of Christ, and such a Head is Christ in his Kingdom. [c] *He is Head over all things to the Church, which is his Body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.* There is [d] *one Lord,* and

[c] Eph. i. 22, 23. [d] iv. 5.

and but *one*; not one *invisible*, and another *visible*, as the slaves of *Rome* are taught to believe. This may be an essential doctrine of that Church, but is no where to be met with in the *Bible*. Not a word, *there*, of holding another Head besides Christ, to whom, as well as to Christ, *every knee must bow*. And so little foundation is there for that modest way of arguing, that the Church must have such a Head set over it, *aliter Dominus non fuisset discretus*, because otherwise the Lord had not been discreet, (which is the demonstration they bring for an *Infallible Guide*) so little foundation, I say, is there for this manner of thinking, that a *Universal Monarchy* in the *Church* would be attended with worse consequences than in the *World*; degenerating into a more mischievous tyranny, and naturally drawing after it the prevalency, every where, of vice and error.

It hath been very judiciously observed, * 'That the main purpose of God in confounding the language of mankind at *Babel*, 'most probably was to prevent the early 'establishment of one great empire in the 'world; and in consequence of that, the 'proportionable growth of every vice and 'impiety among mankind.' And would not the effects of one *Ecclesiastical Empire*, grasping the whole earth, be still more fatal? Tend-

* *Sherlock* of Providence and Revelation, *examined with Candour*.

Tending to make any corruptions in doctrine or practice quickly ſpread themſelves from the head to the members, and from one part to another, over the whole body of the chriſtian world, and to render them, once they obtained, abſolutely incurable. Such an empire therefore could never be deſigned by God; as the diverſity of Languages, uſually attended with a like diverſity of genius, and manners, and inclinations, concurs to make it not only *difficult*, but, in the preſent circumſtances of things, utterly *impracticable*. And, for my own part, I could ſooner believe, that if God had intended the union of all mankind under One Viſible Eccleſiaſtical Head, he would have prepared the way to it, by bringing them back again to one Language, than that he hath actually deſigned there ſhould be any ſuch Univerſal Government in the Church, when it would unavoidably produce ſuch a dreadful train of evils; never yet did take place, and never will, while men are divided by ſo many different tongues, and different forms of civil government. Could we indeed once ſee the eldeſt Heir in a direct line from *Noah* acknowledged abſolute ſovereign of all the countries and regions of the earth, which according to the wiſe ſcheme of ſome men, is his undoubted right as ſoon as he can be found, we might then allow it to be a pro-

per time for the *Pope* to put in for the care and government of all the ſouls in this mighty empire, each of theſe two having, by this means, his proper portion; till then the *Right* in one caſe will by impartial perſons be eſteemed full as *groundleſs*, as the *Fact* in the other is *viſionary*.

The two great branches of Chriſt's regal office are *Legiſlation*, or a power of making laws, and the *Diſtribution* of rewards and puniſhments; and in both theſe he hath no equal or partner.

The Lord Jeſus is our *Lawgiver*, and his law is perfect. No man may preſume to add to it, or diminiſh from it, without uſurping, or diſclaiming his authority. Nothing can be more deciſive than the concluding words of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, containing an account of our Saviour's laſt Commiſſion to his Apoſtles before he left the world; [e] *And Jeſus ſpake unto them, ſaying, all power is given unto me in heaven and on earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world.* I am with you to protect, aſſiſt, and reward you, to confirm your doctrine and bleſs your labours; but then it is on this condition, that you keep cloſe

[e] Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

cloſe to the inſtructions which I have given you, and deliver nothing as a part of Chriſtianity, but what you have received from me, *teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you.* The character given of *Moſes*, *that he was faithful in all his houſe*, as a ſervant, does very juſtly belong to the Apoſtles of our Lord, who were exceeding careful not to paſs beyond their rule, not requiring any thing for which they had not *Chriſt*'s authority. Of this we have a moſt remarkable inſtance in the Apoſtle *Paul*, whoſe exactneſs in diſtinguiſhing betwixt what was the reſult of his *own Thoughts*, and what he had by *Revelation*, cannot be ſufficiently commended. [f] *I ſpeak this by permiſſion, and not of commandment. To the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord.* ver. 10. *To the reſt ſpeak I, not the Lord.* ver. 12. But now, they that pretend to be *Succeſſors* of the *Apoſtles* have not diſcovered the ſame ſcrupuloſity. It would have been much more for their own credit, and for the intereſt of Chriſtianity, if they had. The peace of the Chriſtian Church had not then been diſturbed, the purity of its Doctrine defiled, and the ſimplicity of its Worſhip corrupted by endleſs innovations: nor would an Aſſembly of Chriſtian Biſhops (as the Popiſh Council of *Trent* hath done, calling themſelves at the ſame time *holy* and *œcume-*

[f] 1 Cor. vii. 6.

nical) have impudently declared that the *Oral Traditions* of their Church were by them received, with the ſame pious affection and reverence, as the *written Word* of God; and eſtabliſhed ſuch Decrees, and with ſuch ſanctions, as render it doubtful, at beſt, whether they have not incurred that [g] *Anathema* of the Apoſtle *Paul*, againſt any man that ſhould preach any other Goſpel than that which he had preached. Making more neceſſary to ſalvation than the ſacred writers have done, and ſuch things too as evidently contradict the Truths taught by them, is ſo much like preaching another Goſpel, that conſidering perſons will not think themſelves to have half the reaſon to be afraid of their multiplied, but cauſeleſs curſes, that theſe holy Fathers had to dread that ſingle one of the inſpired Apoſtle.

It were much to be wiſhed, that none who have the name of *Proteſtants* would ever follow the pernicious ways of the *Romaniſts* in this reſpect; and by ſo doing give occaſion for *the way of truth to be evil ſpoken of*. But, alas, where's the Party that hath not been guilty in ſome degree? Nor let any think to come off by ſaying, they only *interpret* the laws of Chriſt, and take them out of their generality, that they may become more uſeful by being diſtinctly ſtated and explained; ſince (beſides that no ſuch right

[g] Gal. i. 8, 9.

right of interpreting ſcripture for others appears to be lodged with any one man or body of men, but the contrary; and theſe pretended interpretations are many times new laws, and ſuch too as make void the old) " this preſumptuous impoſing the ſenſes of " men upon the words of God, the ſpecial " ſenſes of men upon the general words of " God, and laying them upon men's conſci- " ences together, under the equal penalty " of death and damnation; this vain con- " ceit that we can ſpeak of the things of " God better than in the words of God; " this deifying of our own interpretations " and tyrannical enforcing them upon others; " this reſtraining the word of God from " that latitude and generality, and the un- " derſtandings of men from that liberty, " wherein Chriſt and his Apoſtles left them, " is (as the great *Chillingworth* obſerves) " the only fountain of all the Schiſms of " the Church, and that which makes them " immortal. Take away theſe walls of " ſeparation, and all will quickly be one *."

The other branch of Chriſt's Kingly Power is diſpenſing rewards and puniſhments. [f] *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all Judgment*, with the execution of it, *to the Son. Who then art thou that judgeth another man's ſervant? To his own maſ-*

* Chillingworth's *Safe Way.* [f] Rom. xiv. 4.

ter he ſtandeth or falleth. [g] *One is our Maſter, even Chriſt;* [h] *before whoſe Judgment-Seat we muſt all appear, that we may receive every one according to the things done in his body.* Let us [i] *therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and make manifeſt the counſels of the heart; and then ſhall every man, who is worthy, have praiſe of God.* This ſingle conſideration ſhews, beyond all contradiction, that to cenſure and puniſh in matters of mere *conſcience*, or ſuch as do not diſturb the publick peace, is a power not fit to be truſted with mortal men, unleſs theſe *counſels of the heart*, theſe *hidden things of darkneſs*, were known to them; which we are here told ſhall not be brought to light till the day of final account. There is need of ſome better authority to ſupport the claim of ſuch a power, than any can be fetched from *Rom.* xvi. 17. *Now I beſeech you, mark them who cauſe diviſions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned*; though a popiſh Commentator on this place * fancies that it recommends *a diligent Inquiſition after heriticks:* the deſign of which notable obſervation we may ſuppoſe to have been to juſtify the Inquiſition practiſed in the

[g] Mat. xxiii. 8. [h] 2 Cor. v. 10. [i] 1 Cor. iv. 5.

* Facit hic locus pro obſervandis & inquirendis diligenter hæreticis, tanquam hominibus noxiis & Chriſtianæ reipublicæ perniciosis. *Eſthius in Loc.*

the Church of *Rome*; where, for what they call *Hereſy*, that is, in truth, for worſhipping God only, and believing no other things than thoſe which are contained in the holy ſcriptures, a man is firſt thrown out of the Communion of the Church, then out of his Eſtate, and at laſt out of the World. Let all who thus freely deal out death and damnation to others, conſider the doom of that ſervant, who in his Lord's abſence beat his fellow-ſervants; and whether, as their guilt is much the ſame, they are not without repentance, obnoxious to the ſame Puniſhment; [h] *The Lord of that ſervant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with unbelievers.* Having premiſed this ſhort account of Chriſt's Kingly Power, I now proceed,

II. To explain and prove the declaration in the Text, that the *Kingdom of Chriſt is not of this World.* The meaning of which, every one will eaſily apprehend, is not that our Saviour's Kingdom is *purely inviſible.* The *Head* is ſo at preſent, through diſtance of place, but not the *Body.* Our bleſſed Lord hath an *external* Kingdom, *in* the world, though not *of* it, conſiſting of all thoſe perſons, whereſoever diſperſed, who

[h] Luke xii. 45, 46.

own his authority and live in obedience to it. This Kingdom is of the ſame extent with the viſible Church, and by what means ſoever a man is made a member of the one, by the ſame means he becomes a ſubject of the other. It may be called *external*, becauſe it is ordinarily ſubject to the notice and examination of our ſenſes, as other things in the world are. The *ſubjects* of this Kingdom, the *miniſters* of it, its *laws* and *ordinances*, are all viſible. We every day converſe with thoſe who paſs under the name of Chriſtians, and do many things, which are by them intended as teſtimonies and ſignifications of their faith in Chriſt, and ſubjection to him. *Baptiſm* is an outward Rite by which the greater part of chriſtian profeſſors have been received into that number, and laid under the ſolemn bonds of the Goſpel-Covenant; which Covenant many of them have further renewed by joining in the Obſervation of the *Lord's-Supper*, another external Inſtitution of Chriſt's Religion, and viſible badge of his diſciples. If any one, that is a ſtranger to the Kingdom of Chriſt, is deſirous of being better acquainted with it, let him look into the *New Teſtament*, (which is not locked up from prying eyes, as the *Sibylline Oracles* formerly were, unleſs among the *Papiſts*, who have their reaſons for doing it) and he will there find an account of

its

its conſtitution, and of the laws and regulations by which it is governed. If he thinks fit, he may further attend on the Religious Aſſemblies of Chriſtians, in ſome of which it is to be hoped, he will ſee the worſhip of God performed, according to the rules laid down in this ſacred Book, and hear thoſe, whoſe peculiar office it is, preach the Goſpel of the Kingdom, and explain and enforce the duties incumbent upon all that acknowledge Chriſt for their Lord. So that the City of God is a City upon a Hill, which cannot be hid. The Church is a *viſible Society*, and a great part of Religion external.

And yet by the *Viſibility* of the Church we are not to underſtand, that the moſt faithful followers of Chriſt, the beſt and ſoundeſt part of his Church, have always been the greateſt number, and made ſo conſiderable a figure in every age, as to draw the eyes of all the world upon them. On the contrary, the Scripture plainly ſpeaks of a *grand Apoſtacy*, under which [1] *the Woman* (by whom is figuratively repreſented the true Church) *ſhould flee into the wilderneſs*. And therefore it is a very ſilly queſtion which is ſo often, and with ſo much triumph, aſked us, *Where was your Church before* Luther? They have been told that our Religion was in the *Bible*, where that part of

[1] Rev. xii. 6.

of theirs which is peculiar and characteriſtical will never be found. And as many as adhered to the profeſſion and practice of this Religion (as, thanks be to God, there were never wanting ſome that did, and more, we have reaſon to think, than Hiſtory gives an account of) they were by far the moſt valuable, when they were not the moſt powerful, part of the Chriſtian Church; and to theſe (the ſmaller their number, the greater their honour) we reckon it our glory and happineſs to ſucceed. With juſt the ſame reaſon, as the Papiſts put the fore-mentioned queſtion, might the worſhippers of *Baal* in *Elijah*'s time have aſked the worſhippers of the true God---*Where is your Church now?*

The ſum of the argument (and it is a very ſhrewd one) is in ſhort this. The ſame men, by unjuſt reſtraints, cruel perſecutions, and a thouſand wicked arts, firſt of all thin the number of the true profeſſors of the Goſpel, and ſo terrify the reſt, that few have the courage to join themſelves to them; and when they have done, make the very fewneſs of thoſe that openly profeſs the truth (of which they themſelves are the principal cauſe) an objection, and reproach againſt them. It muſt be owned to be no fault of theirs, that they have not carried this argument to a demonſtration in all the parts of *Chriſtendom*, as they have done in *France*, where the Proteſtants are almoſt reduced to a ſtate of *Invi-*

Invisibility. Not to stay any longer on this, the Kingdom of our Saviour is not of this world in the several respects following, omitting others that might be named.

1. It is not of this world in its *original.* So our Saviour himself explains it in the end of the verse, *My Kingdom is not from hence.* It did not spring from the earth, like other Kingdoms. This is the *new Jerusalem*, descending out of heaven from God; of which we may say, as of that City we yet further look for, that its *maker and builder is God.* It did not take its rise from human compacts and agreements, but from the appointment of God; neither was it at first settled by human means, but by a divine hand. This is probably one reason of its being so often styled *the Kingdom of Heaven*, and *the Kingdom of God.* Thus [k] *Daniel*, having described the succession of the four Monarchies, represented by the several parts of the great Image in *Nebuchadnezzar*'s Dream, comes at last to speak of another Kingdom, which the God of Heaven should set up, and which was therefore aptly figured by the Stone cut out of the Mountain without hands; for so did the Gospel prevail and triumph by the influence of an invisible power, which attended it in so wonderful a manner, as to shew that the establishment of Christianity was the sole work of God.

But

[k] Dan. ii. 44, 45.

But now ſhould we aſk the ſame queſtion concerning the *Papal Hierarchy* as our Saviour does about the Baptiſm of *John*, *Was it from heaven or of men?* The ſubjects of that tyranny will be ſure to ſay, from *heaven*, becauſe they are told ſo, and dare not ſay otherwiſe. But they who have more diligently inquired into its original, have proved that it was of *men*, if it had not a more ſcandalous pedigree; that the craft and knavery of the Biſhops of *Rome*, working upon the folly, weakneſs, and vices of Princes, and aſſiſted by the ignorance and diſtractions of the Times, was the foundation of that monſtrous power which the *Man of Sin* by degrees poſſeſſed himſelf of. In a Hiſtory dedicated to Pope *Clement* VII. and wrote at his command before his advancement to that *See*, the * Author hath the honeſty and courage to take notice that the *Emperor* having quitted *Rome* to hold his reſidence at *Conſtantinople*, the *Roman Empire* began to decline, but the *Church of Rome* (that is, the power of the *Popes*) augmented as faſt.

2. In reſpect of the *end* and *deſign* of its eſtabliſhment, the Kingdom of Chriſt is not of the world; being intended for the recovering of mankind from the kingdom of darkneſs, that is, from ignorance, error, ſuperſtition, and vice, by which they are too often led captive, and for their re-union with

* Machiavel's *Hiſtory of* Florence.

with God as their almighty ſovereign, and chief good; for the perfecting of the ſaints in knowledge, charity, and holineſs, and making them partakers of a felicity unſeen and eternal. And the *means* imployed are ſuitable to the *end*, *viz.* a ſyſtem or collection of *Doctrines*, *Precepts*, and *Promiſes* admirably adapted to reform the life, to purify the heart, to exalt the affections, and reſtore the will to its true liberty; together with a very great ſimplicity and ſpirituality of divine worſhip, prayer, preaching the word, and adminiſtration of the Sacraments; which we may conceive to be another reaſon of its being ſtiled *the Kingdom of Heaven*, ſince as it is *from* Heaven, ſo it hath a viſible tendency to raiſe men *to* Heaven, and was deſigned for this very purpoſe. Agreeable to all this, the *wiſdom* which the ſubjects of this Kingdom are to learn, and govern themſelves by, in a more eſpecial manner the *Miniſters* of it, is not *carnal* and *worldly*. Such was not the wiſdom of our Lord himſelf, or of his Apoſtles, [1] *Who had their converſation in the world in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the Grace of God.* They renounced the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs, and were ſtrangers to the crooked politicks that have generally been in faſhion; not having any low, much leſs

[1] 2 Cor. i. 12.

leſs wicked, deſigns to ſerve, which required ſuch management.

Can this be ſaid of all that have adminiſtred the affairs of the Redeemer's Kingdom ſince *that*, particularly of the *Romiſh Polity* and *Politicians?* Have their views been thus remote from the ſpirit of the world? Try them by this teſt. For what end was Popery ſet up, but to gratify the pride, avarice, and ambition of the Clergy and their Retainers? To be the inſtrument of geting wealth and power into their hands? What other views have all the peculiar Doctrines of that Antichriſtian Church? In every age, there have been men of corrupt minds, who have gone upon the ſuppoſition that Gain is Godlineſs, but never were there ſuch flagrant inſtances of this as in the Church of *Rome*, where even Vows of Poverty are only a more concealed art of geting money. Pardons and Indulgences are ſome of the merchandiſe of ſpiritual *Babylon*, and ſo are the Souls of men, the ſalvation of which ſhe openly ſets to ſale; and when this trade ſhall fail, and no man ſhall buy her merchandiſe any more, it cannot be wondered, [m] *If the Merchants of theſe things that were made rich by her, mourn and lament over her, ſaying---Alas, Alas, that great City, that was clothed in fine Linen and Purple, and decked with Gold and precious Stones!---For in one hour is ſo great riches*

[m] Rev. xviii. 11,—16.

riches come to nought. You ſhall hear no ſuch generous offer from the Church of *Rome*, as that in the Prophet, *Ho every one that thirſteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come ye, buy and eat; yea, come and buy wine and milk without money and without price.* No Money, no Indulgence, you muſt either ſuffer or pay, lie in Purgatory if you are not bought out; which is the ground of that ſaying---*That there is no conſolation for the Poor*---whereas, paying your Fees, which have been ſettled in the Pope's Chancery, you may have Abſolutions, Diſpenſations, and what not. By ſuch methods it is almoſt incredible what advantage they have made of the credulity of the People, and thoſe vain terrors which they had raiſed in their minds; how rich one part of the world was grown, and how poor the other. King *Richard* I. in an Aſſembly of the Biſhops of this Kingdom could not forbear telling them with tears in his eyes, * "that he was an unfortunate "Wretch and no King; that the revenues "of his Kingdom were crumbled into in-"finite parcels, of which the leaſt part "came to his ſhare; and that they were "poſſeſſed by Monks and Canons of ſeve-"ral Orders." And how came they in poſſeſſion of them, but chiefly by making people

* Chron. Gervas quoted by F. Simon in his Hiſt. of Eccleſiaſt. Revenues.

people believe that there is such a place as Purgatory, where the Souls of men are little less miserable, for the time, than in Hell itself; that they were keepers of the Prison, and by their prayers and masses could help men out *. What are their Prayers in an *unknown Tongue*, making it a crime for people to examine and judge for themselves, and denying them the free use of the Scriptures? What are these, but the arts they put in practice to keep men in ignorance, and thereby in a slavish dependance upon the Priest, and blind attachment to their Church?

May we not, without breach of charity, add that among *Protestants* whoever make the Christian Religion, or any part of it, an engine of State, seem either to mistake, or not duly consider, the nature of Christ's Kingdom; and not to have the promoting the true interest of Religion so much at heart as they should; but also, if not chiefly some other interest which they dare not avow? For instance all persons must be kept out of Places of Civil Trust and Power, that will not take the Sacrament according to the Rites of the *Church of England*; if they

* The most common Form, in Deeds of Donation in favour of Monasteries, was expressed in these terms, *I* N. *the Son of* N. *give to such a Monastery such and such Goods, for the Remedy of my Soul, or of the Soul of my Father or Mother.* F. Simon's *Hist. of Ecclesiast. Revenues.*

they think differently from the Church (by which the perſons uſing this language always mean their own particular incloſure) they muſt not be admitted into the Magiſtracy †. But why ſo? Is it that the advocates for ſuch *Teſts* ſeriouſly believe, that the *common Cauſe of Chriſtianity* can no otherwiſe be ſo well ſecured, as by ſetting this mark of infamy upon their *Diſſenting Brethren*, and obliging thoſe in their own Church to receive the Sacrament, fit or unfit, inclined or averſe, as a Qualification for Preferment, or the *Domination of a Party?* Are the motives that determine them in this matter purely of a *ſpiritual* and *religious* kind, or taken from the things of this world? I am ſenſible, unleſs thoſe that are concerned will put ſuch queſtions to themſelves, it is to little purpoſe for others to aſk them. I ſhall therefore ſay nothing further but this, that as often as the *Ends* which men openly or ſecretly propoſe in their uſe of any Doctrine or Inſtitution of the Goſpel are *ſecular*, they ſo far contradict the great deſign for which the Kingdom of Chriſt was eſtabliſhed; and by mingling heaven and earth, Religion and fleſhly wiſdom together, make a more heterogeneous alliance, than the gold and braſs and iron and clay did in *Nebuchadnezzar*'s viſionary image.

† Qui ſeorſim ab Eccleſia ſentiunt, a Magiſtratu arcendos cenſeo, *&c.* Liſle's Concio ad Synod. *&c.* 1734-5.

3. The Kingdom of Chriſt with regard to the proper *method* of ſupporting and enlarging it, is not worldly, but ſpiritual; *viz.* by prayers to God, and expoſtulations with men, by the manifeſtation of the truth to every man's conſcience, by the brightneſs of evidence, the beauty of example, and the allurements of charity; by appealing to the Reaſon and Underſtanding of men, convincing their judgments, and thereby making way to their affections; patiently inſtructing the ignorant, reſtoring thoſe that are gone aſtray in the ſpirit of meekneſs, and not only permitting, but encouraging perſons to ſearch the Scriptures, and judge for themſelves; nay, not barely encouraging them to do this, but preſſing it upon them as their duty. Chriſtianity was never intended to be propagated by the ſword. Men are not to be *driven* but *invited* into the fold; nor, in caſe of differences ariſing among Chriſtians themſelves, in underſtanding their common Rule, are they to be ended by force and coercion, by an unbending authority, or by worldly hopes and fears. Fines and impriſonments are penalties for the civil magiſtrate to inflict, and only in civil caſes; not for the Church, whoſe weapons ought to be of quite another kind. Nor ſhould any member of the Chriſtian Church wiſh it in his power to revenge himſelf upon all that have the boldneſs

neſs to differ in opinion from him and his party, or be ready to ſhew his diſpleaſure againſt them, as far as he is able, by hard names, angry threatnings, ſevere and raſh cenſures, and endeavouring to injure them in their reputation or worldly intereſts.

What Apology then can be offered for the *Church of Rome?* Concerning which a judicious Hiſtorian * hath made this obſervation, that were all the wars, maſſacres, aſſaſſinations and publick confuſions, that have ever been in the world upon the account of Religion put together, they would not make a hundredth part of thoſe, that have been cauſed by the *Papacy* in the ſpace of ſix hundred years. This black mark of *Perſecution*, cruel avowed *Perſecution*, is a ſhort anſwer to all thoſe Notes of the Church, by which *Bellarmin* attempts to prove the *Roman* to be the true Church, and the only Church deſerving that title; there being hardly any thing that can argue a greater degeneracy than this uncharitable perſecuting ſpirit, or that is a plainer confeſſion of her having neither *Scripture* nor *Reaſon* on her ſide.

The nearer approaches any other Denominations of Chriſtians make to that Antichriſtian Church in this particular, the further off they depart from the ſpirit of pure primitive Chriſtianity. When will men learn

* Geddes.

to make *Sincerity* the only Teſt of Religion? Not to be too forward and poſitive in determining againſt the *Sincerity* of their fellow-chriſtians, where there is no other evidence of the want of it, than their not acknowledging the truth or importance of every favourite notion of theirs? And leave the puniſhment even of *Inſincerity* to the proper *Perſon* and *Time?* I would not overſtrain the definition of *Sincerity* itſelf, as I apprehend a certain Writer * hath done, as if there muſt be no prepoſſeſſion, no biaſs, no leaning to a ſide, or there can be no *Sincerity*; for wherein then will *Sincerity* differ from *Perfection?* It is enough that a man hath no prejudice inconſiſtent with a prevailing love of the truth; for this in ſhort is what I underſtand by *Sincerity*, even ſuch a love of the Truth, as engages men to ſearch for it as for hid treaſure, and having found it to lay it up in their hearts, and to practice in all things agreeable to it; or, in other words, a conſtant endeavour to *know* and *do* the will of God. This, I will venture to ſay, is the only neceſſary qualification of a faithful ſubject in the Kingdom of Chriſt, the glorious characteriſtick of every ſuch perſon, *that* which ſecures the profeſſors of the Goſpel an infallible title to the favour and approbation of their common Lord, and ought therefore to recommend and

* Dr. *Waterland*'s Importance, &c. p. 159.

and indear them to one another. Nor ſhould they be terrified with any man's bare affirmation, without proof, that ſomething more is neceſſary than *Sincerity*, that perſons may have a *Covenant-Right* to happineſs, that thoſe who are innocent in God's ſight may ſtand only in *Uncovenanted Mercy* *. Strange indeed, that a man ſhould be a true Chriſtian, and not in the *Chriſtian Covenant!* Nay, that he may loſe his *Covenant-Right* to the mercy of God, by taking that courſe without which he could have *no right* to it at all! For that is really the caſe here. Being perſuaded of the truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, the perſons I am now ſpeaking of, are exceedingly thankful for it, and ſollicitous to conform their faith and practice entirely to this unerring ſtandard. They are among the *Hearers* deſcribed by our bleſſed Saviour, who in an honeſt and good heart *having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience*; and therefore, conſcious of their own integrity, may ſafely defy all the empty terrors with which ignorant or deſigning men endeavour to keep them from making a free uſe of their own *Reaſon*, and of *the Word of God:* ſince it is impoſſible there ſhould be any danger, in reſpect of the favour of an infinitely wiſe Being, in examining freely, and judging uprightly.

* Id. p. 126.

In the notion of *godly Sincerity* is included not barely a *right*, but (unleſs in ſome peculiar circumſtances) an *obligation* to inquire and judge and determine every man for himſelf, and then to profeſs and act according to that judgment. He that inquires after truth, is in a better condition, though he miſſes it, than another who comes into poſſeſſion of it by accident; unleſs (as my * Lord *Falkland* ſays wittily) "the Church "be like a conjurer's circle, that will keep "a man from the devil, though he came "into it by chance." According to the obſervation of another excellent judge of men and things---"It is much more eaſy to bear "with a groſs error in any one who brings "with him a mind diſpoſed to hearken to "the meaning of God, than with the plain-"eſt truths of another who aims at impoſing "his own ſenſe on his neighbour; for he "that poſſeſſes the truth after this manner, "hath obtained it by mere accident, not by "a lawful and rightful poſſeſſion, reſulting "from the divine gift, by means of a re-"gular inveſtigation. Such a man poſſeſſes "her, but not as ſtanding on her own "foundation, but on a ſtrange and borrow-"ed one; which is ſo contrary to her ge-"nius, that ſhe will never continue where "ſhe is thus impriſoned, but extricating "herſelf from hence, will betake herſelf "to

* Diſcourſe of Infallibility.

" to ſome free country, where, as in a fair " field, ſhe can be at liberty to make uſe of " her own weapons *."

Impoſing on others in matters of Religion is ſo very oppoſite to the nature of *Chriſtianity*, as a rational Inſtitution, of *man* as a free ſelf-determining agent, and of all *acceptable Religion* as a voluntary ſervice, that whoever do it had need produce the moſt evident demonſtration to juſtify them. Let us ſee very briefly by what the practice can be ſupported.

Infallibility is ſuch a ſhameleſs pretence, hath ſo little foundation in *Scripture*, in *Tradition*, and in the *Reaſon of the thing*; and is ſo very contrary to all *appearances*, to the *characters* of the perſons, who, by thoſe that believe the thing, are generally agreed to have ſome ſhare of it, if not the whole (I mean the Popes of *Rome*, the vileſt ſpecies of men, for a long ſucceſſion of them, that ever were) to the ſtupid *Interpretations* of Scripture †, and fooliſh and hurtful *Doc-*

* *Vitenbogart* in a Letter to the cited Remonſtrants at the Synod of *Dort*. *Vide* Brandt's Hiſtory of the Reformation, *&c.* v. 3.

† Of all men the Pretenders to Infallibility have ſucceeded moſt unhappily in expounding Scripture. Fallible Interpreters have often given a moſt ſurprizing light to obſcure and difficult Paſſages, and, one may venture to ſay, have certainly found out their true Senſe. While the infallible Interpreters have been infallibly in the wrong, in expounding the plaineſt Places.

trines that have flowed from this fountain: I say *Infallibility* upon these and other accounts is such a shameless pretence, and hath moreover been so often, and so well exposed, that some of the Papists themselves are ashamed of it. One of them particularly, a Champion of their Church, frankly owns, that this fame *Infallibility* is an unfortunate word, and wishes that it was forgotten, or at least laid aside *. And indeed *Infallibility* itself, as long as the Proof of it is only *probable*, will not answer the end for which they have recourse to it, *viz*, that the Faith of Christians may be a *divine Faith*, which they say it cannot be, if the evidence it rests on be only probable; as the evidence according to them, can be no more than probable, if men that are fallible are left to draw every one

Places. Two or three Instances may serve by way of Specimen. Pope *Boniface* VIII. proves the Supremacy from *Gen.* i. 1. *In the Begining God created the Heaven and the Earth*; therefore the Pope hath power in Temporals and Spirituals; unless you will say with the *Manichees* that there are two Principles. *Exod.* xxii. 28. *Thou shalt not revile the Gods, nor curse the Ruler of thy People.* See a plain proof of the Dignity of the Priesthood, for the Law of God here setting Priests before Kings, calls them Gods and the others Princes. Would one think that the power of the Pope should be foretold in those Words, *All Kings shall fall down before him, all Nations shall serve him?* Ps. lxxii. 11. And yet the Council of *Lateran* have given us their Authority for it, that this is the meaning of that Place.

* *Cressy* in his faithful Narration, &c.

one his own Faith, *immediately* from the *Scriptures.* But now, where is the mighty difference, if in this fundamental Queſtion, whether there be any ſuch infallible Guide appointed, (not to inſtance in ſeveral other leading Queſtions) fallible men are to be determined by their private judgment of the nature and weight of the proofs brought for the Affirmative? Of this particular truth, if it be a truth, they cannot be more certain, with an infallible Guide, than we are, or may be, of all the neceſſary truths of Chriſtianity. And, if not certain of this, their belief of *Infallibility* cannot render them more certain of other things; ſince the ſuperſtructure can have no greater firmneſs and ſtability than is in the foundation. But what if we ſhould be ſo good-humoured to grant them, what they will never be able to prove, that an *Infallible Certainty* might be had of the *Infallibility* of ſome Perſons, in the Church of *Rome*; even this would not do, unleſs we were further aſſured that our infallible Guides *would* not, or *could* not, *knowingly* lead us wrong; being either ſo *inflexibly honeſt*, as, in defiance of all temptations, to remain faithful to their truſt; or ſo *irreſiſtibly over-ruled* by a ſuperior influence, as, contrary to their own inclinations, and the views of intereſt and power, which ſwayed them in all their other actions, to ſpeak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing

thing but the truth. And for both these, the least security to be required is the *Gift of Miracles* annexed to that of *Infallibility*. And it must be confessed, one of the Notes of the true Church given by the *Romanists* is *the Glory of Miracles*. Only there is this double misfortune, that the Miracles of that Church do not very well answer the character of *divine Miracles*, which, being intended to manifest the truth of something else, are very manifest themselves: whereas *theirs* have all the marks of fraud and imposture upon them; and were they never so real and great, would not have weight enough to balance such a prodigious mass of absurdities and contradictions as that Religion is composed of.

To renounce *Infallibility*, and at the same time hold fast the claim of *Authority*, or a right to require *Subscription* to any number of Articles in words of mens devising is no better than raising a mighty building upon the Sand. It is laying a burthen on the necks of Christ's disciples, more insupportable to thinking and ingenuous minds, than that yoke of legal ceremonies which the Apostle *Peter* saith, *neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear*. It is challenging a power, as it may chance, to depose and persecute the truth, and establish error in its room; the least hazard of which ought not to be run, without the most uncommon necessity; and so much the rather, as *established Forms* are more

more eaſily introduced, than, after they have been conſecrated by length of time, they are removed again, or to be reviſed and altered, whatever occaſion there be for it. To argue for ſuch authority from the uſefulneſs of it, amounts to this extravagant aſſertion; "That the happieſt conſtitution of the "Church, is that which hath the moſt ap-"parent tendency to promote the growth "of Ignorance, Uncharitableneſs, and Hy-"pocriſy; which, when they ſpring from "a blind regard to *Church-Authority*, are "rather to be choſen than *Freedom of En-"quiry* attended with probity of mind, "charity, and an encreaſe of divine know-"ledge." I mention this laſt, becauſe more knowledge may reaſonably be expected where every man is invited to examine things and ſee with his own eyes, than where the buſineſs of examining and determining, or rather of determining without examining is devolved upon a few.

In Societies erected for the advancement of the Sciences this is the method taken, in which there are as many *Judges* as there are *Members*, and no authority is admitted but that of Reaſon and Experience. And why a like method ſhould not be proper for the right underſtanding the Book of *Scripture* as well as that of *Nature*, I cannot imagine. The plea, that the Church does not define any of theſe Queſtions as neceſſary to be

be *believed*, either *Neceſſitate Medii*, or *Neceſſitate Præcepti*, that they are not Articles of *Faith* or *Aſſent*, but only of *Peace* or *Union* *, will do but little ſervice. In the *Prophet*'s language, the bed is ſhorter than that a man can ſtretch himſelf upon it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himſelf in it. One can hardly forbear obſerving, that if theſe Articles are not impoſed as neceſſary to be *believed*, *Neceſſitate Medii*, in order to *Salvation*, yet the *ſubſcribing* them is a neceſſary qualification for exerciſing the Miniſterial Office in the Church: beſides which, it might be further remarked, that if theſe Articles were only deſigned as Articles of *Peace*, the *Compilers* have not been very happy in expreſſing their meaning, having made choice of words that ſeem to imply the quite contrary †. But paſſing over theſe things, methinks, all that are againſt their being impoſed as Articles of Faith, ſhould reckon them no little hardſhip under the notion of Articles of Peace, and to be a real violation of that Peace, which they are intended to ſecure. For what is the Peace of the Church, but every man's enjoying unmoleſted all thoſe Rights and Franchiſes which our Lord hath bequeathed to his

* Bp. *Bramhall* and others. See Chillingworth's *Life*.

† Articles whereupon it was agreed——for the avoiding the Diverſities of Opinions, and for the eſtabliſhing of Conſent touching true Religion.

his followers; for which, this of finding out the truth, and defending it in the beſt manner we are able, is one. And how any man, who judges it unlawful to ſubſcribe to the *truth* of certain opinions, can be ſatisfied to promiſe that he will not at any time *oppoſe* and *contradict* them, is, I confeſs, a thing beyond my comprehenſion. So far am I from being convinced by any thing which a learned Divine hath ſaid, "that "barely propagating his ſentiments can "make a man a Heretick, and a wickeder "man than he would elſe have been *," ſince, after a ſober debate of the matter with himſelf, he may verily think it his duty openly to vindicate his opinions, and may do it in a modeſt and chriſtian manner. Suppoſe him miſtaken, yet his guilt in oppoſing the truth, under the notion of error cannot be ſo great as acting in direct contradiction to his conſcience would be; one is like aſſaulting a friend, believing him to be an enemy, for which we are heartily ſorry as ſoon as we come to know it; the other is knowingly deſerting one whom we judge to be a friend, out of cowardice, or ſome worſe principle, the crime of which is not at all leſſened by its afterwards appearing that he was really an enemy, but unknown to be ſuch: and then whether the opinions impoſed are conſidered as Articles of

* *Dr.* Waterland's *Importance*, p. 114. and 145.

of Faith, or only of Peace, the temptation is much the ſame which they lay men under, to ſhut their eyes that they may be able to go blindfold, where they could not, or not without a great deal of fear and reluctance, with their eyes open.

Sometimes to juſtify their hard uſage of thoſe that will not ſubmit to their dictates, the friends to Impoſition alledge, as the reaſon of it, the *certainty* on their ſide, and the *perverſeneſs* and *obſtinacy* on the other. "The Church, ſay they, is morally certain "in what ſhe proves *——We pretend not "to impoſe Articles of Faith in an arbitrary "manner——We require no man to receive "them for true becauſe they are ours, but "becauſe they carry their evidences along "with them, and will bear examining. And "whereas it may be ſaid, that the Proteſ-"tant Churches however do determine "before-hand, that every perſon upon ex-"amination *ought* to find theſe things true, "which they have formed into Creeds or "Articles; it is owned that they do ſo, as to "the *main things* at leaſt, and where is the "harm? It is no more than preſuming that "there are ſome things ſo *certain*, that the "Reaſon of mankind *ought* to ſubmit to them, "and that thoſe things which they have de-"fined are of that kind †." This, and more to

* Waterland's *Importance*, &c. p. 181.
† Ibid. p. 196.

to the like effect, is their Apology for themſelves. In anſwer to which it is obvious to obſerve, that tho' men cannot poſſibly be miſtaken in what they *really* prove, yet nothing more common than to be ſo, in thinking they prove a thing when they do not; that *confidence* very often ſhews the *man*, and not the *cauſe*, and that there ought to be ſome plain *Criteria* to mark the diſtinction between thoſe *main things* which the Church is morally certain of, judges neceſſary to be believed, and hath proved to be ſo, and *others* in which ſhe is not ſo poſitive. But paſſing by this, let men be as certain as they pleaſe of the truth of their notions, does it therefore neceſſarily follow that theſe notions muſt appear with the ſame certainty to all unprejudiced underſtandings, in whatever light they are ſeen? The very nature of ſome truths might convince them of the contrary, the evidence of which not ariſing out of the things themſelves, like Propoſitions in *Mathematicks*, but from *external Revelation*, the proofs drawn from thence may ſometimes be ſo balanced by Objections both from *Reaſon* and *Scripture*, that it is no wonder if all honeſt minds, neither having the ſame capacity, nor being placed in the ſame circumſtances, are not alike affected by them. Now unleſs the Impoſers were as certain that all ſincere perſons muſt be of their mind, as they are that they themſelves are in the right, they ought to be more mode-

moderate and reſerved in the cenſures of thoſe, whoſe *Creed* does nor conſiſt of all the ſame Articles that theirs does; and ſhould not be too forward to enlarge the liſt of *Fundamentals*, in which without the gift of diſcerning ſpirits, they may eaſily be miſtaken. In a word, that every perſon ought to *examine*, will be readily granted; but that every perſon, upon examination, *ought* to *find* thoſe things true, which any Church hath ſeen fit to form into Creeds or Articles, will, I doubt, hardly paſs for ſenſe, ſince after examination they can find things no otherwiſe than they appear, the aſſent or diſſent of the mind, a previous inquiry being ſuppoſed, not depending upon its own choice.

The moſt plauſible pretence of all is the *Peace of the Church*, which it is ſaid is diſturbed and violated by a diverſity of opinions in Religion; for theſe produce ſeparate Communions, and ſeparate Communions deſtroy Peace and Unity. But why then are not the *Terms* of Communion framed with a greater latitude, that no ſerious peaceable Chriſtian, if poſſible may be excluded? Or if thoſe of any particular Communion judge every thing in that Communion to be well-ordered, and that they are obliged in Conſcience to conform to it and defend it, by all means, let them be maſters of their own conduct; but let them withal remember, that others may think differently of the ſame things, and of their

their duty with regard to them, who ought not therefore to be judged and concluded by their conſcience. Not joining in external Communion, out of a principle of conſcience, with thoſe from whom a man differs in his opinion of the truth of ſome things impoſed and profeſſed, and the lawfulneſs of other things practiſed, in that Communion, is really joining or agreeing with all the ſincere members of that Communion, in what is of much greater moment than external Communion can be; even in following what he apprehends to be the truth, and keeping a good conſcience. This he does in *ſeparating* from ſuch a particular Communion, as they do by *continuing* in it. So that whatever differences there are between them, they are united in the *bond* of *integrity*, which is that which holds all the faithful followers and ſubjects of Chriſt together, and not a *unity of opinion*, or *uniformity* in modes of worſhip. From hence I infer, that ſince there may be the ſame *integrity* in perſons of different Communions, there ought to be *mutual charity*; and that they who make it their buſineſs to poſſeſs ſuch perſons with prejudices againſt each other, do not take the way to promote the intereſts of Chriſt's Kingdom. Once more,

4. Our Saviour's Kingdom did not *interfere* with the Kingdoms of this world. None were deprived of their dominions to

make room for it; nor did he teach doctrines dangerous to the Civil Government; his title was not inconsistent with the titles of earthly Princes; nor his rights with theirs; nor the power that was given him with any lawful power exercised by them over their subjects. Instead of overturning their thrones he confirmed them, and was so far from discharging subjects of their allegiance to their lawful Governors, that he made it their duty to obey for conscience sake; declined intermeddling in controversies of a temporal nature, saying, *Who hath made me a Judge, or a Divider over you?* And tho' he was a King would not be proclaimed so to the world till after he had left it, that the *Jews* might have no occasion to mistake in the nature of his Kingdom, nor the *Romans* have any jealousy upon the account of it. *Herod* needed not have been so much alarmed at the birth of Jesus, as to make a slaughter of the Children of *Bethlehem*, in hopes he would have been cut off among the rest, if he had had a right notion of the Messiah's Kingdom, and could have foreseen what sort of King Jesus would have proved. Nor had the *Romans* the least reason from his doctrine, or life, to apprehend that he would be a mover of sedition. And before the Governments of the world became Christian, the disciples were like their Master, equally inoffensive in their principles and behaviour.

I am

I am afraid it would not be quite so easy to clear all the professors of Christianity in following ages, especially the Ecclesiasticks. For, not to mention those among ourselves, who, while they owe their worldly wealth and pomp and grandeur to the State, set up for *Independency* on it, and pretend to be invested *Jure divino* with such powers as visibly entrench on the authority of the Prince, and the rights and liberties of the subject, to whom, alluding to a well-known fable, we might say in the language of the Poet *, 'Lay down your temporal Emoluments, and 'return to your first Poverty, if you would 'not have the State to meddle with your 'affairs, not claiming any other power but 'to instruct and feed the flock of God;' I say, not to expose the pretensions of these men as they deserve, I shall only take notice that the doctrine of the *Pope's Supremacy* over all persons, civil and ecclesiastical, Princes and Subjects, is such a gulph as does at once swallow up the rights and privileges of all mankind. In vain hath Christ said, *My Kingdom is not of this world*, if his Substitute at *Rome* hath authority to depose Kings, and give away Kingdoms; if he hath the revenues and armies of a Prince, and lives with the same state and attendance. The same person styles himself *the Successor*

* Macra cavum repetes arctum, quem macra subisti.
Hor. Lib. I. Ep. 7.

of Peter in the chair of Rome; but is no better qualified to be St. *Peter's Succeſſor*, than the *Vicar* of *Chriſt*. When *Cornelius* fell down at *Peter*'s feet, he immediately expreſſed his diſlike of ſuch an exceſſive veneration, and raiſed him up, ſaying, [m] *I myſelf alſo am a man.* Did the Pope ever read this hiſtory? Or does he regard it, and conſider how little reſemblance there is between him and his Predeceſſor, when he ſuffers men, Kings themſelves not excepted, to adore him like a God, not only falling at his feet, but kiſſing them too? Which fawning cuſtom a Popiſh Commentator * fancies he hath found a place of Scripture to juſtify. [n] *And Kings ſhall be thy nurſing fathers, and Queens thy nurſing mothers; they ſhall fall down to thee with their face towards the earth, and lick up the duſt of thy feet.* Was ever ſuch inſolence, for a mortal man, and a Chriſtian Biſhop, one who ſhould teach others humility by his example, to claim ſuch extravagant honours? Or was there ever ſuch impudence as his flatterers are guilty of, when they quote ſuch paſſages of Scripture in defence of this abominable practice? You ſee then it is not from *Chriſt* or St. *Peter* that the Pope hath derived that worldly ſtate and power in which he rivals earthly Princes. No, but the *Papal* Pontificate (as hath been clearly proved

[m] Acts x. 25, 26. * Cornelius a Lapide.
[n] Iſa. xlix. 23.

proved by a Writer of this Nation *) did with all its preeminences ſpring from the *Heathen*, as both of them, the *Heathen* High-Prieſt and the *Chriſtian*, owed their *Primacy* ſolely to the *Civil Primacy* of the City of *Rome*. The Biſhops of *Rome*, at the time the Pagan High-Prieſthood was diſſolved, took upon them the ſame State that had belonged to that Office, and laid claim to all the ſame privileges, which made the Governor of that City (who was a *Heathen*) ſay, "Make me "Biſhop of *Rome*, and I will be a Chriſtian "too." But if it be further enquired from whence he had that power, by which he lords it over Princes, takes upon him to make and unmake Kings, and releaſe Subjects from their allegiance, diſpenſing with the moſt ſolemn oaths, excommunicates them, lays their Kingdoms under an interdict, gives their Dominions to others, authorizes traitors and aſſaſſins, and, if they fall in their attempt, canonizes them? I anſwer, that in all this he hath no other example than the Devil, who having ſhewed our Lord all the Kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, tells him, by way of inducement to fall down and worſhip him, that he would make a grant of them to him, for they were all delivered to him, and to whom he would he gave them. The titles of *Lord God*, *Vice-God*, and *Pontifi-*

* Gaddes.

cal Omnipotence, given to the Pope by his flatterers, not without his own consent and approbation, would afford something like a foundation on which to build his other claims, if they really belonged to him. But this only aggravates the affront to God, as well as the insult upon the authority of Princes. The Pope is guilty of much the same impious presumption, in regard of Almighty God, as that of *Salmoneus* in the fable, who is said to have challenged divine honours; and, in order to obtain them, to have endeavoured to imitate *non imitabile fulmen*, the thunder of heaven which is inimitable. For thus does the Pope of *Rome* sit in the temple of God, shewing himself as God, uttering his thunders from the *Vatican*; and pretending, like God himself, who ruleth in the Kingdoms of men, to pull down one and set up another. And may we not hope, that as the Poet * describes *Jupiter* with his thunder striking that daring wretch, so the time will come, when the Pope shall be thrown from his Seat by that God, whose honours he hath so long arrogated? We may not only *hope* for such a time, but we *know* that it will be, and know not but it may be near. Let us pray that God would hasten it, and destroy the Kingdom of the Beast and all its Dependencies, that the Kingdom

* Virgil. *Æneid.* L. 6.

dom of our bleſſed Saviour, which is not of this world, may appear in its true glory.

I ſhall juſt Apply what hath been ſaid in two Inferences, and conclude.

1. Is not the Kingdom of Chriſt of this world? Then from hence it will follow, and from hence we are all of us to draw this inſtruction, that the ſincere diſciples of Jeſus, the true ſubjects of his Kingdom, are not of this world. So our Maſter himſelf, praying for his diſciples, ſays, *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* This denotes both their temper and character, and the expectations which they are to have from the world.

The *temper* and *character* of real Chriſtians are denoted by their not being of this world. They are not of this world, their governing temper and their general converſation are not worldly. They are not conformed to this preſent world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds. As far as they are under the power of a worldly ſpirit, ſo far they are of this world; and as far as they are of this world, ſo far they have no relation and title to a better. Hence the *children of the world*, and the *children of light* ſtand for two oppoſite characters. The children of the world chooſe the world for their portion, and have hardly any other rule but the maxims and examples of the world; the children of light walk under

the guidance of that light which came from heaven, and leads thither; the word of God is their rule, the glory of God their end, and God himself their exceeding great and everlasting reward.

The other thing, signified by the Christian's not being of this world, is the *lot* and *condition* which he is to look for in the world. Here he hath no continuing city, no certain resting-place, he is only a stranger and pilgrim on earth, and very often must expect to fare, after much the same manner, as strangers use to do. [o] *If ye were of the world* (saith our Lord to his disciples) *the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* These words of our divine Master were most remarkably verified in the first Christians; and do so far hold true at all times, that the best men are seldom the greatest favourites of the world. And however the world uses them, tho' contrary to its custom, in the most indulgent and friendly manner, they must not think to pass thro' the world without their portion of sorrow and affliction; for tho' *verily there is a reward for the righteous*, yet this world is not a place for dispensing it. Let us, my Friends, consider this, and endeavour so to live in this world, and to preserve such a disposition and state of mind, with regard

[o] John xv. 19.

regard both to its good and evil things, that it may evidently appear, that we are not of this world in the ſame ſenſe they are ſo, whoſe portion is in this life, but that we ſeek for another country, even a heavenly.

2. The Miniſters of Chriſt in a more eſpecial manner, remembering whoſe Miniſters they are, and for what purpoſes called and appointed, ſhould eſteem themſelves obliged to form all their views, and every part of their behaviour and management, agreeably to the nature and deſign of the Redeemer's Kingdom. Their buſineſs is to preach the Goſpel of the Kingdom, pure and unmixed and to labour for the advancement of peace and righteouſneſs, which are the Kingdom of God among men, thereby training them up for the Kingdom of Glory hereafter. We may be allowed, *my Brethren*, to magnify our Office, and have a great deal of reaſon to do it, provided only, we rightly underſtand, and faithfully diſcharge the duties of it. Zealous we ſhould be for the cauſe, intereſt, and honour of our divine Maſter; but then it is highly neceſſary that our zeal be according to knowledge, leſt while we think we are doing him good ſervice, we be really gratifying our own paſſions, and contending for the tenets and honour of a particular faction or party, to the prejudice of that *one faith*, and *one common intereſt*, in which all true Chriſtians are equally concerned.

cerned. We are not to betray the *leaſt* truth, but the degree of our zeal ſhould always be proportioned to the *importance* of the truths we defend; and, in the manner of defending them, is to be directed and governed by prudence and charity. Be it our care to inſtil into the minds of our hearers the excellent principles of pure and undefiled Religion, of love to God, univerſal charity and good-will to men, as their fellow-creatures and fellow-ſubjects, and of unſhaken fidelity to their heavenly King; to raiſe them to a divine temper, to engage their preference of things unſeen, and to be helpers of their faith, hope, joy, and patience; the effect of all which will be, that they will better fulfil the duties of every relation, whether to their Families, to their Friends and Acquaintance, to their Prince, their Country, or to the Church of God.

And that our inſtructions may have the more certain and abundant ſucceſs (as well as upon other accounts) let us be ſure to live and act no otherwiſe than we teach. Let all our exhortations be enforced by the powerful oratory of a good example. While we point out heaven to others, let not our eye and heart, our chief deſires and aims for ourſelves, be fixed upon the earth; as if we were willing to put others out of conceit with it, only that we might have the greater ſhare of it ourſelves. Let us abhor every

every thing that would be an indication of a low, ſordid, tricking, ſelfiſh, tyrannical diſpoſition. Let us call no man *maſter* upon earth, nor ſet up for *maſters* ourſelves; but imitate our Saviour's Fore-runner, who deſired no greater honour, than that of conducting men to the Meſſiah, in whoſe glory he would diſappear, as the morning-ſtar in that of the riſen ſun. [p] *He muſt increaſe, but I muſt decreaſe.* Far from lording it over God's heritage, and acting as if we imagined ourſelves to have dominion over the faith of our fellow-chriſtians, we ſhould rejoyce to ſee them in the peaceable poſſeſſion, and full exerciſe of that liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made them free; never better pleaſed than when the Church liſtens to the voice of the heavenly Bridegroom, as he ſpeaks to her in the lively oracles of truth, and regards no other authority but his.

The leſs fond we ſhew ourſelves of worldly power and dominion, the greater influence ſhall we be likely to have over the minds of men, and ſtand higher in their inward eſteem and reſpect; which is a ſort of power more honourable to us, and by all wiſe and good men much more to be deſired than the other, as it will furniſh us with a capacity and opportunity of doing more good in the world. And let us not, like *Diotrephes*

[p] John iii. 29, 30.

trephes, love an invidious preeminence among ourſelves. They are memorable words of our divine Maſter, which he ſpoke to his diſciples, when ſomething of this ſpirit ſhewed itſelf among them, and they ſhould ever live in our remembrance. [q] *Whoſoever will be great among you, let him be your miniſter, and whoſoever will be chief among you, let him be your ſervant.* In perſons intruſted by their King and Country with the management of civil affairs, next to integrity, the chief thing required is *political wiſdom*, that they underſtand the times, what they need and what they will bear; are acquainted with the true intereſt of Prince and People, and will contribute their part to maintain the publick tranquility. This is *their* praiſe. Let it be *ours* that we are wiſe to win Souls, have a juſt notion of the rights and intereſt of the Chriſtian Church, and, according to our proper ſphere and capacity, are inſtrumental to preſerve and promote them.

To conclude---Let us be ſincere, diligent, and faithful, and we ſhall in no wiſe loſe our reward.

[q] Mat. xx. 26, 27.

TWO SERMONS ON SECRET PRAYER.

To which are added

Two Essays on PRAYER,

I. Concerning the rational Grounds of Prayer in general.

II. Concerning the Qualifications necessary to render Prayer an acceptable service.

1736.

THE PREFACE.

THAT the perfection of man consists in his likeness to God, and his final happiness in the enjoyment of him; are truths of the same evidence, and importance. And it is very observable that these two, I mean the perfection and happiness of reasonable Beings, have a mutual influence upon each other; for the more perfect any such Being is, the greater is its capacity for the fruition of God, its supreme good; as, on the other hand, the more perfect the enjoyment it hath of God, the more perfect will its nature become; its faculties proportionably widen and improve, and a degeneracy from its present state be more unlikely, and, morally speaking, impossible. Then shall holy souls be like God indeed, when they shall see him as he is; when, beholding his glory, they shall be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory;

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by which entire conformity to the moſt excellent of all Beings, they ſhall be fitted for the neareſt acceſs to him, and the ſublimeſt acts of contemplation, love, and praiſe. This plainly ſhews what is the principal buſineſs and felicity of man in the preſent life; they are both compriſed in that one precept, Acquaint thyſelf with God.

Heathens have been inſtructed by the light of Nature to place Religion in an imitation of the object whom we worſhip; and this is, certainly, the right notion of the matter. Whoever profeſſes an eſteem and veneration for God, but takes no care to be like him, does no more than compliment him; he cannot love God as he ought, nor think very advantageouſly of thoſe perfections, which he doth not judge it worth his while to be at any pains for acquiring. The great deſign of the Goſpel is to bring us back to God, the fountain from which we had ſtrayed; that being reſtored to a participation of his image in this world, we might be made forever happy by him, and in him, after death. Now the queſtion is, how this aſſimilation to God ſhall be wrought. I mean not by what efficient cauſe; *for what other* efficient *can be ſuppoſed of this ſupernatural change than God himſelf? But by what* inſtrumental cauſe, or means? *A queſtion that is eaſily anſwered. Would we reſemble God? Let us frequently converſe with him. Acquaintance and familiarity inſenſibly produce a ſimilitude of manners and diſpo-*

disposition. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, he will be taught by their example, and excited to an emulation of their virtues. The same would be the effect of being often with God, which is one ground or reason of the scriptures describing Religion, by walking with God. *The truly religious man sets the Lord always before him. God is often in his thoughts; he often darts his soul upward in pathetic ejaculations and wishes, saying, O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest! Nor does he stop here, but by these momentary acts of devotion, as I may call them, he is prepared for more set and continued exercises of it, and hath his inclination to them encreased. So that it would be a vain thing for any one to think of excusing himself from the stated duties of piety, by pretending that all the same ends are sufficiently answered by short, occasional conversions of the mind to God, frequently intermingled in the common train of our thoughts. For I will be bold to say, that whoever hath this happy art of conversing with God in the midst of his ordinary affairs, will not be able, nor desirous, to excuse himself from waiting upon him, at proper intervals, in a more express and solemn manner; any more than a person, who meets his friend in company with others, will be satisfied with that, so as never to covet the enjoying him alone. He that walks with God hath his seasons of retirement, and communion*

with him; when he bids the world get behind him, and quit, for a time, all his common delights, that he may give himſelf to Reading, Meditation and Prayer, and, in the ſilence of earthly paſſions, may hear God ſpeaking to him in the ſtill voice of his love.

When I conſider this, that the Chriſtian's main duty and concern is to endeavour an abſtraction of mind and heart from the world, and to raiſe himſelf above all preſent things, by faith and love, by prayer and praiſe, and this with a view to his being, after a life ſpent in ſuch preparatory methods, tranſlated into the immediate preſence of God, there to dwell forever, in bliſs unutterable; when I conſider this, and at the ſame time ſee a great, I had almoſt ſaid the greater part of perſons profeſſing godlineſs, immerſed in earthlineſs and ſenſuality, conformed to the courſe of this world, without manifeſting any thing of a divine temper, or taking any pleaſure in the operations and entertainments of the divine life, ah, think I with myſelf, how little genuine, vital Chriſtianity is there left among thoſe, who carry the name of Chriſtians! Can the happineſs of ſeeing God in heaven be reſerved for theſe low, carnal minds, that induſtriouſly ſhun all intimacy with him now? Do they eſteem indeed this promiſed viſion to be any happineſs?

That by peruſing the following Sermons *(publiſhed at the requeſt of ſome whom the Author knew not how to deny) ſuch of my readers as had*

had before none, or a ſuperficial regard to the duty of SECRET PRAYER, *may be perſuaded to the conſtant and delightful practice of it; and others, in their approaches to God, receive ſome aſſiſtance towards kindling and keeping alive the heavenly flame, ſhall be the earneſt Prayer of one, whoſe greateſt ambition, he truſts is, (he is ſure ought to be) to ſerve thoſe ſouls which Chriſt died to ſave.*

SERMON V.

The Duty and Advantages of Secret Prayer.

MAT. VI. 6.

But thou, when thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in ſecret, and thy Father who ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly.

PRAYER may be conſidered merely in its general notion, as an addreſs to Almighty God; or as diſtinguiſhed into its ſeveral kinds, mental and vocal, ſocial and ſolitary. Of theſe, it is not agreed among interpreters, which is refered to in the Text. There are thoſe who expound the words,

Enter into thy closet, in an allegorical or myſtical ſenſe as if, in other words, it ſhould have been ſaid, " enter into the ſecret cham-" bers of thy ſoul; let thy Prayers be men-" tal, and thy worſhip of God performed " within, in thy own heart." If the deſign of this allegorical interpretation be to exclude, or degrade joint vocal Prayer as of no neceſſity, or of little uſe, and to inſinuate that Religion is nothing but *Quietiſm*, it proceeds upon a manifeſt miſtake, ſince we are to exalt God in the congregation, and not to forget the aſſembling of ourſelves together; not ſurely, that being aſſembled, we may, as the manner of ſome is, paſs the time *in ſilent muſing*, but with one mouth, as well as one heart, praiſe the name of the Lord, preſent our common ſupplications to him, and give our moſt heedful attention to his holy word; having the promiſe of our Saviour, *that where two or three meet together in his name, he will be in the midſt of them*, to do what they ſhall agree to aſk of him. In caſe the whole intended be this, that in Publick Prayer, and in the midſt of a religious Aſſembly, we ſhould have our eye to the frame and workings of our hearts, and unite our ſecret deſires to the Prayers offered up in the houſe of God, nothing is more true; in as much as without this hidden devotion all the outward ſigns and expreſſions of devotion, will be

be of no avail. But though thisb e true, yet I do not apprehend it to be any part of the meaning of the Text, which, as will preſently be ſhewn, ought to be underſtood in the obvious acceptation of the words.

Others therefore are of opinion, that this direction of our Lord concerns the duty of Prayer in general, and that he only ſpeaks comparatively that we ſhould rather ſeek retirement when we pray, than deſire to pray in company with others, who may take notice of our ſeriouſneſs and zeal. This, ſay they, is the ſum of the matter, that whether we pray alone, or before others, we ſhould have the ſame diſregard to the praiſe of men, and the ſame unfeigned and pious regard to God, as if ſhut up in our cloſet, where we had him alone as a witneſs to our words and actions, as well as to our thoughts. This, I own, is a good ſenſe of the words, and comes nearer that which is the true ſenſe of them than the other, yet does not, as I conceive, juſtly expreſs it; it being very probable that our Saviour is here ſpeaking of ſeparate or particular Prayer, and condemning a very odd way, which, it ſeems, the Phariſees had of performing it: for ſo ſhameful was their hypocriſy, that inſtead of retreating from the world when they made their particular Prayers, their cuſtom was to pray in the Synagogues, and corners of the ſtreets, in places of publick reſort and com-

pany, on purpoſe to draw the eyes of men upon them. For a pretence, they pleaded the rules laid down by their Rabbies or celebrated Doctors, who preſcribed certain times for the reciting of the Philacteries (being portions of the law written upon pieces of parchment, which they carried about with them) and the Prayers belonging to them; ſo that when the time enjoined them was come, in whatever place they then happened to be, they muſt repeat over their Prayers. This being their rule, they ſo ordered the matter, as to be caught in the ſtreets at the canonical hour, that they might be obliged to ſay their Prayers there, and ſo doing get the reputation of an exact and punctual devotion. That which gave the firſt handle to this theatrical way of offering up their ſeparate Prayers, might, for ought I know, be a cuſtom the Jews had (as we ſee in the parable of the Phariſee and the Publican) of chuſing the Temple for the place, where they made their private ſupplications; thinking, perhaps, that the ſanctity of the place would render their Prayers more acceptable than they could be any where elſe. In oppoſition to which ſuperſtitious conceit of theirs, an Apoſtle of our Lord commands us *to pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.* It is not the venerable character of the place, but the good diſpoſition of the worſhipper that God hath

hath regard to. There never was a *real holineſs* by which ſome places were diſtinguiſhed from others; and under the Goſpel there is not ſo much as a *relative* and *ceremonial* one; though if our churches were thus holy, the cloſet would much better ſuit the nature and deſign of ſeparate Prayer than they. Hither therefore our Lord counſels us to retire, and for our encouragement, tells us, that though we are not ſeen of men, our heavenly Father both obſerves, and will reward us.

That ſeparate Prayer is a duty, and a duty which all men will not live in the neglect of, is here taken for granted, *But thou when thou prayeſt*, &c. For the form of expreſſion muſt not be underſtood as leaving us at liberty, whether we will pray by ourſelves or no, and only obliging us to do it apart from the view of the world, whenever we think fit to do it at all. We can no more infer any ſuch thing from this mode of ſpeaking, than from Chriſt's warning the people in another place, *to take heed how they hear*, we may conclude it a matter of indifference, whether we hear the word of God, or whether we forbear, ſo that we ſhall have nothing to anſwer for, provided, as often as we do hear, it be in a right manner. Theſe duties are ſo exceeding plain and evident, that if perſons have any conſcience of their obligations to God, they will not be able wholly to omit them, Beſides,

ſides, that the ſcope of our Saviour's diſcourſe (as you will ſee if you look into the chapter) did not lead his diſciples to pray to God, and to give alms to men, but to rectify a great abuſe that was crept into theſe duties, and, like dead flies in the ointment of the Apothecary, ſpoiled their virtue. The Phariſees performed theſe duties very frequently, but in ſuch a manner as turned what they meant for ſacrifice into an abomination, and was therefore by no means fit to be imitated. For this reaſon, having ſuppoſed that men, thoſe at leaſt that make a profeſſion of Religion, would not entirely paſs by theſe known duties, he lays down directions for the regular conducting them; and particularly as to Prayer, he charges his diſciples, that for the better performance of private Prayer, they ſhould make choice of a private place.

To affect being ſeen or heard of men, is bad at any time, but worſt of all in our perſonal converſes with God. *Enter into thy cloſet*, εις το ταμιειον; the word ſignifies any ſolitary and quiet retreat, where we may be concealed from the notice of the world, and, as much as poſſible, undiſturbed by its noiſe. It is not otherwiſe *Secret Prayer*; for how can that be ſaid to be done in ſecret, which is not done ſecretly? The reaſon given for this ſort of Prayer, *that God ſeeth in ſecret*, implies that no one elſe does.

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It may not be a ſecret to thoſe we live with that we do thus pray; they may make it their obſervation that we ſpend ſome part of every day in our cloſet or chamber, and from concuring circumſtances may have reaſon to think, that we ſpend it in ſpiritual exerciſes, ſuch as Reading, Meditation, and Prayer. Nor is there any harm in all this; nay, if we could ſo contrive it as to be in Secret Prayer every day, and the reſt of the family know nothing of it, and have no ground to ſuſpect it, yet we ought not to be guilty of ſuch an exceſſive ſhyneſs, ſince it would look too much like being aſhamed of Religion, and might ſcandalize and harden thoſe, who would be edified by our good example. We are not bound to incur the ill opinion of men, in order to gain the approbation of God; but ſhould rather do what will deſerve, and is likely to procure their eſteem, that the wholeſome inſtructions and admonitions we give them, may have the greater force upon their minds, when they ſee them accompanied with a ſuitable practice in ourſelves. Nor do our Prayers ever the leſs merit the name of *Secret*, becauſe we have the reputation in our families, and among our acquaintance, of perſons piouſly diſpoſed. Of this we muſt be ſure to take care, that our good be not evil ſpoken of, that we do not appear fond of being obſerved, and, while we are in our cloſets, inform

inform all that are any thing near us of what we are about, by the loudneſs of our devotions, or make the longer ſtay there, that by the length of the time people may meaſure our extraordinary piety. They that have not the ſame conveniences for ſecrecy that others have, ſhall be accepted, if they are as retired as they can be, when they are not ſo retired as they would; for this is what we muſt endeavour, that our Prayers have the qualification required in the Text; and ſuppoſing we do, to this end, make choice of the moſt ſecret places that are in our power, and manage the whole in a modeſt and unaffected manner, we have done, in this reſpect, all that we are obliged to.

In the further handling of this ſubject, my deſign is,

I. To offer ſeveral conſiderations in proof of the duty of Secret Prayer.
II. To ſhew the very great, and ſingular advantages of it. And,
III. To conſider the particular caſe, or queſtion, concerning the frequency of its performance.

I. I ſhall offer ſeveral conſiderations in proof of the duty of Secret Prayer.

1. The Scripture commands it; not I confeſs in terms, but by manifeſt conſequence and

and fair interpretation. Were the words of the Text the only authority we had to build this practice upon, it ſhould be abundantly ſufficient with ſuch, as make profeſſion of the greateſt reſpect, and veneration for all the injunctions of our bleſſed Lord. Theſe are among the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, hearing which the multitude admired him, and which we ſhould piouſly reverence. It is true our Lord ſaith not, *Pray thou in ſecret*; but he ſaith what amounts to the ſame, *When thou prayeſt enter into thy cloſet, and pray to thy Father in ſecret.* He argues upon it, as a thing not diſputed at any time, that men ought to pray by themſelves; and I hope it ought to be much leſs diſputed now by us, who have this excellent rule for the manner of performing the duty. Had it not been antecedently a duty, Chriſt would not have concerned himſelf to lay down any directions about it; he would have acted beneath himſelf in ſo doing, and have done what he never did, with regard to the traditionary practices of the Jews. The Phariſees had introduced a great many uſages into Religion, for which they had nothing to plead from the law of God, either moral or poſitive. Does our Lord direct them how to manage themſelves in the doing theſe things, if they would do them, without any way endeavouring to undeceive them

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in the notion they had of these things being commandments of God, which were only human traditions? Not at all. And we may be confident he would have passed over Secret Prayer with the same neglect, in case it had been as destitute of foundation in Reason and Scripture, as some other customs common in that age. And after all, it doth not look well, when in a matter like this, that is as much a privilege as a duty, men insist upon the most express command; and unless the precept be delivered in words that cannot be evaded, will not be satisfied of their duty, nor set about the practice of it. It argues but too plainly that their heart is not right with God; for I can hardly make any doubt, that all good Christians, all who have a taste for the exercises of Religion, and have had communion with God in them, will be convinced of their obligation to pray to him in secret, and exceeding glad of the encouragement they have so to do. And by the way, this encouragement to Secret Prayer, or the reward promised to the conscientious performance of it, is a clear intimation of its being a duty; for promises are made to duties, and the most valuable promises to the most excellent duties. The Apostle *Paul* exhorting children to obey their parents, takes notice that it was [a] *the first commandment with a promise*; whereby he would

[a] Eph. vi. 2.

would ſuggeſt that filial obedience is a thing highly pleaſing to God; and I know not why we may not conclude after much the ſame manner in the preſent caſe. Secret Prayer is recommened by a promiſe immediately annexed to it. It is therefore an undoubted duty, and a duty which we ſhould delight in, becauſe God does, we to pray in ſecret, as he to ſee us pray. And the argument is the ſtronger here, for that the promiſe is of a more divine and elevated kind, than that the fifth commandment is followed with. The promiſe there is temporal, *That thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* Here it includes temporal, ſpiritual, and eternal bleſſings. The reſult is, that if the Text was the only ſcripture proof, which we could alledge for the duty of Secret Prayer, it is abſolutely deciſive, and ſufficient to ſilence all doubts in this matter; but we need not be to ſeek for other arguments from ſcripture. Give me leave to inſiſt upon two or three.

1. The general commands of ſcripture relating to the duty of Prayer, carry in them an obligation to Secret Prayer, as well as to the other kinds of it; for when no particular ſort is ſpecified, and the context doth not reſtrain the command to one ſort more than another, we ought to conclude, that all the ſorts are intended, which the nature of

of the thing will admit. The ſame reaſon one man may plead for excluding Secret Prayer, becauſe Secret Prayer is not particularly mentioned, may be brought by another, or by the ſame perſon againſt Publick Prayer, becauſe there is as little mention made of that; and, according to this way of interpreting ſcripture, the laws that enjoin ſome general duty, which hath ſeveral particulars under it, will be of no ſignification at all; ſince it is certain, that when a duty of ſuch a general nature is performed, it muſt be performed in ſome one particular way. A man cannot pray to God, and his Prayer be neither ſocial nor ſolitary, neither publick nor private. It muſt be one or other; and therefore when the command runs in general terms, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that it reaches to all. Indeed if it otherwiſe appeared that Publick Prayer was a duty, but not as to Secret, then the Text exhorting to Prayer in general, might juſtly enough be underſtood of Publick Prayer, and no other; but this is not the caſe here. From what hath been already ſaid, the obligation to Secret Prayer is manifeſt, and will be yet further ſo from the following conſiderations; for which cauſe, it ought to come in for its ſhare in the general command. I ſhall content myſelf with citing a few of theſe general precepts, [b] *Pray always with all*

[b] Eph. vi. 18.

all Prayer and Supplication. Now how is it poſſible we ſhould pray always, if we do not pray in ſecret? It is acknowledged, that though we do pray in ſecret, and that often, yet we ſhall not pray always according to the rigor of the term. The term therefore is not to be taken in its rigor, as if we were bound to imploy all our time in Prayer; this would be abſurd. However, though it doth not, and cannot imply the continued and uninterrupted exerciſe of Prayer, it ſeems moſt naturally to denote the frequent exerciſe of it. It is hardly proper to ſay that a man prays always, who prays but ſeldom, as a great part of the world muſt needs do, if they never pray but in publick; the opportunities for ſuch Prayer being nothing comparable in number, to thoſe of ſacrificing to God in ſecret.

Another thing obſervable in the Text now quoted is, that as we are *to pray always*, ſo *with all Prayer and Supplication. With all Prayer*, and therefore with Secret, which is one principle kind of it. *With all Prayer and Supplication*; where two words are uſed, not improbably to ſignify, that we muſt abound, as in the ſeveral parts, ſo in the ſeveral kinds of Prayer. Thoſe words of the ſame inſpired writer, in his firſt Epiſtle to *Timothy*, contain a like precept, [c] *I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy*

[c] 1 Tim. ii. 8.

hands without wrath and doubting. The former precept regarded the univerſality of time, this of place. We are not confined to conſecrated ground. Our Prayers, from whenceſoever they aſcend, if our hearts accompany them, ſhall come up before God, even into his holy hill, whether our ſouls take their flight from the publick aſſembly, the family, or the cloſet. I ſhall name but one Text more, being of univerſal extent in reſpect to the ſubject-matter of Prayer, as the two former were as to the time and place. [d] *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, make known your requeſts unto God.* In theſe words, if any one particular ſort of Prayer be more eſpecially intended than another, it is Secret. My reaſon is this, that Prayer is here preſcribed as a ſovereign remedy againſt thoſe anxious diſquieting cares, which the heart is too often overcharged with. Would we be careful for nothing? In every thing we muſt pray, and give thanks; which is not ſo convenient, were it poſſible to be done, in Publick Prayer; for a Prayer, in which a company of Chriſtians join, cannot take notice of the caſe of every individual perſon. Would we make known to God all our requeſts in the multitude of emergencies that affect the civil and chriſtian life, our various wants and ſtraits, fears

[d] Phil. iv. 6.

fears and diſtreſſes? It can be no where done ſo compleatly and diſtinctly, as in ſecret, which is one peculiar advantage attending Secret Prayer, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew more fully afterwards.

2. Whatſoever is neceſſary to the accompliſhment of any thing commanded, is made a duty by the command obliging us to that thing. The means are always included in the end. This is a ſure rule in the interpretation of laws, eſpecially divine laws. The immediate end of the law is obedience; and if that obedience is not to be attained, but by ſomething elſe which is not directly commanded, the latter, though not directly commanded, yet, becauſe previouſly required to the other, is commanded by conſequence; otherwiſe a perſon might break all ſuch commands, and not ſin; for either he ſins in neglecting the means pre-required to the end enjoined, or not at all; but in neglecting the means he doth not ſin, if no way obliged to the uſe of thoſe means, becauſe where there is no law, there is no tranſgreſſion. And if he ſins not in this neglect, he is guilty of no fault in not keeping the law, becauſe, this neglect being firſt ſuppoſed, the keeping of the law is impoſſible. Now to apply this to the argument in hand. The ſcripture, in too many places to need particular citations, makes it our duty to lead a devout, a holy and religious life, a life of converſe

with God, to be mortified to the preſent world, and to have our converſation in heaven, to ſet our affections upon things above, and not on things on the earth; in a word, to be continually haſtening to, and preparing for the coming of the day of Chriſt. This is every where the language of the New Teſtament; and in all this do we not hear a voice, ſaying, "Enter into thy cloſet, and pray "to thy Father in ſecret?" Tell me, how the divine life ſhall be kept up, but by frequent communion with God in our retirements, as one principal help to it? Muſt we not look to things ſeen, inſtead of things unſeen; muſt we not cool in our zeal, for the life and power of Religion; muſt not our hearts decline from the love of God, and quickly grow indifferent to any further acquaintance with him, if we do not often ſhut our door againſt the world, and withdraw to meet with him whom our ſouls love? Surely, there can be no ſuch thing as true and vital Religion, a fervent and ſteady devotion, an eſtabliſhed and growing virtue, where Secret Prayer is forgotten. It is by ſecret duties that the ſoul is called off from the world, the holy fire ſtirred up and kept from expiring, the inward man compoſed, good reſolutions confirmed, and the graces of the Spirit awakened and improved. The concluſion of this matter is, that Secret Prayer, being an inſtrument of Religion, and

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as neceſſary to the ſpiritual life as our common food is to the bodily, all thoſe places of ſcripture, which ſpeak of ſuch a life as the condition of eternal ſalvation muſt be looked upon as ſo many commands and exhortations to Secret Prayer.

3. We may argue from Scripture examples; the examples of thoſe, whoſe names are in the book of life; examples of the beſt of men, and of the Son of God himſelf; examples recorded to their praiſe, and with a manifeſt indication that God approved them. No example is of any authority againſt law, ſo as to over-rule it; but tho' example muſt never be alledged againſt law, it may ſometimes be of great uſe in coming at the knowledge and meaning of the law. Here good precedents are often of a ſingular advantage; nay, and in ſome caſes, examples may have the binding force of laws, as when the memory of them is kept up by the lawgiver, on purpoſe to incite others to the imitation of them. It is ſo in the buſineſs of Secret Prayer; for the examples of this kind that we meet with in the ſacred hiſtory, with the circumſtances there attending them, are a plain diſcovery of the will and pleaſure of God; and the will of God, in what manner ſoever diſcovered, whether directly or indirectly, by promiſes, by threatnings, by examples, hath all the obligation of an expreſs and formal law. Good men are called *the generation of them that ſeek God*; this is a great part of

their character, and such a part as renders them beloved of their Maker, and deserving of honour and esteem among their fellow-creatures.

David was a man much in Prayer, in Secret, as well as Publick Prayer; and it is observable, that this same person was *the man after God's own heart.* He was a man of great infirmities, yet still *the man after God's own heart*, because if his infirmities were great, his devotion was greater; he loved much. That *Cornelius* might be had in everlasting remembrance, it is recorded of him, *that he was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house*; and then, as a proof of his great piety, it is added, that *he gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.* How were it to be wished, that many who pass for good Christians were able to produce so substantial an evidence of their love to God, and charity to men, as this heathen Proselyte here doth. The same hands that he lifted up to God in Prayer, he stretched out in acts of kindness and beneficence to the poor; his Prayers sanctified his alms, and his alms prepared the way for the success of his Prayers: such Prayers could not but come up before God as incense; the lifting up of such hands could not but be as the evening-sacrifice; and so the angel of God tells him, *thy Prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.* And what is the reward of this his eminent piety, than which greater was scarcely to be found in *Israel?*

Why,

Why, he is brought to the knowledge of a Saviour, and bid to ſend for *Peter*, who ſhould inſtruct him in what he muſt do to obtain everlaſting life. And ſee how the evidence conſpires! The meſſengers ſent for *Peter*, find him gone up into the houſe top to pray, where he fell into a trance, and ſaw heaven opened, and a viſion deſcending from thence; of all which you have an account at large in the tenth chapter of the *Acts*. So that we have here already, a good man under the Old Teſtament, a heathen Proſelyte, and a chriſtian Apoſtle bearing teſtimony by their example to the practice of Secret Prayer; one a ſubject to the law of *Moſes*, the other of the law of *Reaſon*, the third of the law of *Chriſt*.

That St. *Paul* too, the choſen veſſel, did frequently exerciſe himſelf in ſecret godlineſs, may be gathered from ſeveral paſſages in his Epiſtles; particularly where he tells the *Philippians*, *that he thanked God upon every remembrance of them always in every Prayer of his for them all, making requeſt with joy*. I ſhall conclude this head with the example of our great Maſter, which at once crowns and outſhines all the reſt. He, tho' the Son of God, took on him the form of a poor petitioner, that he might teach us how to pray. In that excellent Directory, ſtiled the *Lord's Prayer*, he hath taught us how to pray, but teaches us more effectually by his example. He prayed with his diſciples, that

from him we might learn to pray in our ſeveral families; and he prayed apart from them, that we might alſo learn to pray in ſecret. His time was divided between devotion and charity, converſing with God, and doing good to men. The ſun ſaw him by day diſpenſing his divine doctrines, a brighter, more quickening, and heavenly light than his own. The ſtars by night, as they moved their rounds, beheld him breathing out his ſoul to God. The angels that waited near him with delightful wonder, obſerved a ſoul burning with a flame of love ſurpaſſing theirs. They were witneſſes to the humility, the ardour, and the filial reſignation that went along with his morning and evening oblations. Clouds of incenſe were not ſo fragrant. We read of his being *all night long in Prayer*; he would not entrench upon the work of the day, and therefore borrowed time from the ſilent watches of the night. "How can we think "of this example of one, whom we call "our Maſter and Lord, and not be power-"fully moved and affected by it? How "can we think of the Son of God wreſtling "with his Father in ſecret, and not reſolve "to imitate him? O my ſoul, follow thy "Saviour into his ſacred privacies; there be-"hold him pouring out his heart before God! "See how he prays! With what ſtrength "of faith! What fervour of affection! What "humble importunity! How conſtant! How

"unwea-

" unwearied! When thou ſeeſt all this, chide " thyſelf, O my ſoul, for thy little likeneſs " and love to thy Redeemer, for thy back- " wardneſs to duties in which he goes be- " fore thee, the flatneſs of thy affections, " and thy heedleſneſs and inattention, tho' " thou haſt ſuch an example to awaken " and fire thee! O Jeſus, I admire thee, " but would not content myſelf with admir- " ing thee only, may I be ambitious of re- " ſembling thee! I will look to Jeſus as the " perfect pattern of ſolitary Religion, of a " contemplative no leſs than an active life; " and when I find myſelf cold, and lifeleſs, " and dry, I will ſay to myſelf, he that com- " mands thee to pray to thy Father in ſecret, " hath left thee his example, that thou " ſhouldeſt do as he did. And how was it that " he prayed in ſecret? Not as I do; no, he " prayed much more earneſtly; and I will la- " bour to be, and to do like him." And thus I have finiſhed the ſcripture-argument for Secret Prayer; upon which I have been the larger, that I might make it evident, that this duty is not without ſufficient foundation in the word of God, as I fear too many are apt to think of it that it is. To proceed therefore to another conſideration.

11. The reaſons that evince Prayer in general to be a duty, taken from the ſeveral parts whereof it conſiſts, may be urged with equal ſtrength for Secret, as for any other ſort

ſort of Prayer. Confeſſion, Petition, and Thankſgiving are the three moſt noted parts of Prayer; and from each of theſe the argument for the duty I am now eſtabliſhing is inconteſtible. It is not more fit and proper that men ſhould confeſs their ſins together, than that every man ſhould confeſs his own ſins to God. It is not more fit and proper that men ſhould ſpread their common wants before God in their united Prayers and Supplications, than that every man ſhould make known his private and particular requeſts. It is not more fit, and proper, and decent, that men, ſhould offer to God the ſacrifice of Thankſgiving for the mercies they jointly partake of, than that every man ſhould gratefully acknowledge the perſonal favours he receive from the hand of God. In the preſent apoſtate ſtate of mankind, *Confeſſion* of ſin is become an eſſential part of Prayer. We all of us ſin againſt God, ſocieties and ſingle perſons, and are therefore bound to confeſs our ſins to Almighty God, and humble ourſelves for them; every church apart, every family apart, and every ſoul apart. In many things we offend all, and ſhould therefore daily proſtrate ourſelves at the footſtool of the throne of grace, in a lowly ſenſe of our great unworthineſs and guilt; we have our particular ſins and errors, and ſhould therefore make our particular confeſſions; our ſecret faults, and ſhould therefore pray and confeſs in ſecret. Publick confeſſion is not

ſo

ſo much the act of this, or that, or the other perſon, as of the congregation. In ſuch confeſſion there cannot be room for the enumeration of the ſins and tranſgreſſions of all preſent, with their ſeveral aggravations (as it is impoſſible they ſhould be known but to the perſons themſelves) and upon this ground it is highly expedient, not to ſay neceſſary, that every guilty perſon ſhould make this his own act, by confeſſing his ſins to God in ſecret, and ſetting them, as far as he is able, in order before his own eyes.

And then, as to *Petition*, can we ſatisfy ourſelves with concurring in the Prayers that are preſented by others? Do they fully expreſs our deſires? Can they ſo exactly ſtate our caſe as ourſelves may? Is Prayer, conſidered as an acknowledgment of our dependence upon God, an undoubted duty? And muſt not Secret Prayer be as neceſſary a duty upon the ſame account? Is it enough that we now and then mix with the crowd in their addreſſes to heaven? Should we not likewiſe go alone; eſpecially knowing that we ſhall be welcome? How juſt and conſonant to to the firſt dictates of Reaſon is it further, that for the innumerable, and undeſerved benefits which God beſtows upon us, we ſhould make him the return of our thanks and praiſes, having our hearts too much enlarged with ſentiments of gratitude to confine themſelves to thoſe general thankſgivings, which Chriſtians

ſtians make uſe of when together? Our ſouls ſhould be often engaged in abſtracted meditations of the love of God. We ſhould delight to recollect the mercies he diſpenſes with ſo liberal a hand, and to tell him how ſenſible we are of them; to own our debts to his goodneſs, as great as thoſe to his juſtice, too great and immenſe for us ever to diſcharge. The humble, penitent, thankful Chriſtian, can never allow himſelf in the omiſſion of Secret Prayer, convinced he is under the obligation to pray in ſecret, as to pray at all; and even conſtrained to make his ſecret confeſſions, petitions, and thankſgivings to his heavenly Father.

111. Self-dedication is a natural duty enforced by additional obligations from redeeming grace. The *Macedonian* converts are commended by St. *Paul*, for firſt giving their ownſelves unto the Lord, before they extend their liberality to the indigent members of Chriſt, 2 *Cor.* viii. 5. And in this ſenſe we may ſay the altar ſanctified the gift; the conſecration they made of themſelves to God to be his temple, in which temple the heart was the altar, imparted a value to the other gifts which they offered. Now this ſelf-dedication, to be managed as it ought to be, requires that a perſon be ſometimes by himſelf. In real conſtruction indeed the worſhip of any number of perſons is a dedication to God, of all who bear a part in it; but then this is

not

not appropriate, and distinct enough wholly to answer the great ends of self-dedication. Sacramental dedication is more adapted to these ends than the ordinary acts of publick worship, and, in some respects, is more solemn and affecting than that which passes in secret; but tho' the former be somewhat more solemn, the latter hath the advantage in this, that it may be carried on as we find most convenient, and the opportunities for it return oftener. In a world so full of temptations as this, and with a heart so prone to depart from God, it is necessary that we should frequently devote ourselves to his service, and engage our souls to cleave to him, saying, "Lord, I am thine, thy creature, "thy servant! I cannot too often mind my- "self of the relation I have to thee, and "beseech thee to keep me in thy love! Being "drawn by thy mercies, I do here present my "whole man a living sacrifice, I trust, holy "and acceptable through Jesus Christ, and "own that it is but my reasonable service! I "will repeat this dedication of myself in secret "to thee, who seest in secret." But one man was created at first, and coming out of his maker's hands, in the fulness of his intellectual powers, no doubt can be made that he immediately turned himself to the source of his Being, and confessed his power, wisdom, and goodness by invocation of his name. As soon as the woman was formed,

and

and given him to be the partner of his happineſs, we may reaſonably preſume they joined their voices, and their hearts in hallelujahs to their common Parent and Lord. As this original pair multiplied, their worſhip inlarged, diffuſing itſelf into families, and then into more numerous aſſemblies. But we muſt not conceive that the addition of ſocial worſhip ſuperſeded ſolitary, which was prior to it. Notwithſtanding this, it muſt exceedingly become individual perſons to recognize the fountain of their mercies and perſonally and ſeparately to dedicate themſelves to the God of their lives.

IV. If we conſider men as converted or unconverted, in which two claſſes they are all comprehended, there are peculiar obligations lying upon them to Secret Prayer Are they converted? Or doubtful whether they are not? And can they go, from day to day, without begging of God his converting grace? Or hope this grace ſhall be given them without their imploring it? Should not their fears put them on taking refuge in the mercy of God? Should not a guilty conſcience drive them to the blood of Jeſus, that it may be purged and cleanſed? Should not the chains they are held in make them deſirous of liberty, and cry to God to ſet them free? Can they have any ſatisfaction in their minds, any true peace and comfort, while God is offended, and they take no care

to

to appeaſe his anger? Can they think of death, and not turn pale; of a judgment to come, and not tremble; they who are yet in their ſins, and pray not to God to deliver them from the guilt and dominion of them, from their ruling and their damning power? *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you*, &c. theſe are the encouraging words of our gracious Lord, in which he ſeems to have a more peculiar regard to Secret Prayer, and in that Prayer to the grace of converſion. *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you*, "Lord, I "own it would be moſt unreaſonable for "me to expect it on any other terms! How "can I have a thing cheaper, than for the "aſking? How have the conſcience to de- "ſire it? Our heavenly Father will not de- "ny his Holy Spirit to them that aſk him. "Without that Spirit powerfully working "on my ſoul, I can do nothing that will "be effectual to ſalvation; never be changed "and quickned; never become meet for "the preſence, and favour, and enjoyment "of God. And may I hope that this di- "vine Spirit ſhall be imparted to me, and "will dwell with me, unworthy as I am "of his ſacred influences, having ſo often "grieved, reſiſted, and almoſt quenched "him? And to obtain this heavenly gift "is my aſking him of God all that is ne- "ceſſary? It is; with this condition, that "I do not retract and unſay my Prayers in

"my

" my life and actions. I am resolved, " O God, to be a humble and constant " supplicant at thy throne, and will not let " thee go till thou bless me, in turning me " from all mine iniquities!"

Nor, after he is converted, may the Christian let down Secret Prayer, being under as pressing obligations as before, though upon a different account. The Spirit given to believers in conversion, is not only a Spirit of Holiness, but a Spirit of Prayer and Supplication. Do not duty and inclination both carry friends to be frequently in each other's company, when they have conveniency for it? It is certain, they otherwise do but trifle with the name of friendship. You are savingly acquainted with God; he hath taken you into a special covenant, honours you with the stile of friends; and will you restrain Prayer before him in secret? Is not this to shun his friendship, giving him broad signs that you are sick of his company? Like the church in *Isaiah*'s time, of whom God complains, [e] *Thou hast not called upon me*, O Jacob; *thou hast been weary of me*, O Israel. Are you not obliged to be daily conversing with him, in whose presence you hope to dwell for ever? If you have grace, should you not lay hold of every opportunity to actuate and increase it? And is not Secret Prayer one considerable way of doing this?

[e] Isai. xliii. 22.

this? Upon the whole, I will venture to ſpeak my mind, that no ſincere and zealous Chriſtian will eſteem it a thing fit to be diſputed, whether Secret Prayer be a duty.

I now come, according to the method propoſed,

II. To lay before you ſome of the many great benefits and advantages, that wait on Secret Prayer, and may convince us of its being as much our intereſt, as what hath been urged before ſhews it to be our duty. And here, to prevent all miſtakes, I take leave to mind you of theſe two things.

1. In extolling Secret Prayer, I have no aim to depretiate thoſe other kinds of Prayer that are Social and Publick; on every one of which all good Chriſtians will ſet the higheſt value. Theſe are all neceſſary, all excellent in their kind, have all their reſpective advantages, do all contribute to the carrying on the great work of our ſalvation, and conſpire to make the ſpiritual man perfect, thoroughly furniſhed to every good work. There is a friendly harmony and agreement among the ſeveral ſorts of Prayer; and ſo far are they from interfering, and claſhing with each other, that neither of them can be profitably minded, but in conjunction with the others. Conſidering the Chriſtian's circumſtances in this world, neither of them

can be well ſpared, nor, where opportunities offer, ſafely laid aſide. A religious aſſembly is a moſt lovely ſight; the ſolemnity of publick worſhip, and the ſerious behaviour of the worſhippers, are very edifying. Theſe are the beauties of holineſs, a reſemblance, though but ſhort and imperfect, of the heavenly ſociety. A praying family is likewiſe beheld with pleaſure by him, who hath promiſed to bleſs the habitation of the juſt; it is honourable in his eyes, and ſhould be ſo in the eyes of men. This is the way to have our tabernacles in peace, and to viſit our houſes, and not ſin; when, like *Job*, we ſanctify our houſhold by continual ſacrifices. Such a family as this, ſurrounded by families that call not on the name of the Lord, is like *Gideon*'s fleece, which had the dew of heaven reſting upon it, while the ground all about it was dry. So that by ſpeaking in praiſe of Secret worſhip, I do not at all detract from the other two.

2. Nor do I pretend to enter into a compariſon of theſe ſeveral ſorts of Prayer, nicely weighing the benefits of each, and at the concluſion giving the preheminence to that which is Secret. Perhaps, if ſuch a compariſon was made, and we gave to each of them its due, we ſhould not be able readily to pronounce which excelled, being like ſome parts of a well-proportioned building that

that ſeem ſo equally to conſpire, though in different ways, to its commodiouſneſs and ornament, that it is hard to determine where the odds lies. Some poſſibly may be inclined to aſcribe moſt to this kind, others to that; and they may without prejudice enjoy thier ſeveral opinions, ſo they do not look upon all beſides that particular ſort of Prayer as needleſs, or very little uſeful. It is ſufficient for my purpoſe, if the advantages of Secret Prayer are ſuch, and ſo many, as to endear it to every wiſe and ſerious Chriſtian; and that they are ſo, the following Particulars may decide.

1. Secret Prayer may be performed with leaſt diſtraction. Such is the weakneſs of our nature, and ſuch the imperfection of the preſent ſtate, that the holieſt perſons, perſons of the moſt even and uniform temper, have not an abſolute command of themſelves; not even in places, and times, and exerciſes, wherein they are moſt deſirous to be ſerious and collected. And what then can be hoped from others, who have not their minds under ſo good government? When the ſenſes are ſtrongly aſſaulted by their ſeveral objects, it is hard to keep the thoughts at home. And hence it comes, that in company, or in noiſe or hurry, the duties we attempt are more broken and ſhattered; ſomething or other is continually intruding to make us forget what we are a-

bout. One impertinent viſitant or other knocks at the door, and the ſoul is but too eaſily prevailed upon to admit of their entrance. Ah, when will it be, that in a crowd of worſhippers, our thoughts will be our own, and God alone be regarded by us? When ſurrounding objects ſhall be no hindrance to our devotion, and thoſe that join with us ſhall, by their preſence, excite our pious affections, never diſturb them? This will not be till we come to heaven, where the high praiſes of God ſound from ten thouſand tongues, without one ſtraying heart in all the vaſt aſſembly. At preſent we are no where entirely free from diſturbance; but in ſolitude we are freeſt. Here the ſoul hath the beſt opportunities for ſelf-recollection, and to ſhut out a buſy world; and therefore it is, that the devout perſon, in order to converſe with himſelf, and with God, turns aſide out of the common road, and endeavours to hide himſelf where earthly cares and pleaſures may not ſo eaſily find him. Abide you here, ſaith he, while I go yonder and worſhip. When [f] *Iſaac* would meditate, he made choice of the evening as the ſtilleſt time, and of the field as the moſt lovely place; and ſo the *Pſalmiſt* adviſeth, [g] *Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be ſtill.*

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[f] Gen. xxiv. 63. [g] Pſal. iv. 4.

In the wakeful hours of the night, the ſilence of the ſeaſon will whiſper reverence to our thoughts, and be a means of fixing them. In like manner, the more Secret our Prayers, the leſs diſtracted will they be. When we have got, as far as we can, out of the reach of vanity and care, when we have ſhut ourſelves up in our cloſets, and ſtrictly charged ourſelves with the conſideration of the deſign of our coming thither, and the awfulneſs of the preſence into which we are come; when we have warmed our hearts with preparatory meditations, and are about to pour them out in Prayer to God, what is there now to ſtep in between the ſoul and its unſeen delight? What ſhould prevent its enjoyment of God to the height, I had almoſt ſaid, of its wiſhes, or rather of what this mortal ſtate will allow? Now, if ever, it may lay hold of him. Now, if ever, it may talk to him, and not be interrupted. The truth is, when moſt alone, we are not ſo much alone as we ſhould be. We cannot enter the cloſet, but ſome of our enemies will thruſt in after us; ſo that we are obliged to be fighting, when we ſhould do nothing elſe but pray. However, the cloſet is our ſafeſt retreat; and though the place be not like the enchanter's circle, which, it is pretended, the Devil would in vain attempt to violate, yet this evil Spirit hath not that advantage here to work his ends,

not having ſo many temptations and diverſions to ſecond him. The Devil could do little without the world, which ought to have no communication with our private retirements. And O the joys of the ſoul, when the King brings her into his chambers! When ſhe finds herſelf alone with her beloved, and vows to be wholly and for ever his! When, in her raptured thoughts, ſhe runs over his excellencies, his benefits, his works, his promiſes, and gives vent to her own deſire! Were the good man, in ſecret duties, as free from inward diſtractions, as he ſometimes is from outward, hardly any thing would be wanting to compleat his happineſs.

11. Secret Prayer hath the advantage of greater liberty. But this particular, with others that remain, I ſhall conſider in another Diſcourſe.

SERMON VI.

The Advantages of Secret Prayer.

MAT. VI. 6.

But thou, when thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in ſecret, and thy Father who ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly.

IN handling this Subject my deſign was,

I. To offer ſeveral conſiderations in proof of the duty of Secret Prayer.

II. To ſhew the very great and ſingular advantages of it.

III. To consider the particular case or question concerning the frequency of its performance.

The first of these I have gone through, and made some progress in the second.

I have observed,

1. Secret Prayer may be performed with least distraction.

I now add,

11. Secret Prayer hath the advantage of greater liberty. In social worship, it is impossible but we should be under some check, or restraint, from the presence of spectators, not being able to do the thing we would, lest some ill construction should be put upon it; on which account we are forced to act with something of uneasiness; we have not that entire freedom which we may use by ourselves. In Secret, we have no one to consult but ourselves; no rule to follow but our own edification; since by whatsoever edifies us, God is pleased to reckon himself glorified. Here our looks, our gesture, our method and expression may be all unconstrained. The only question is, whether I find this, or that, or another way serviceable to the better performance of the duty?

duty? If it be, I am at liberty to take it, and may, without any fear of offending, indulge my inclination; as whether it be by unhidden ſighs and groans, by ſhedding of tears, by lifting up the hands or the eyes to heaven, by ſtanding, or kneeling, by proſtrating myſelf. If the affections of our minds do naturally prompt us to ſuch bodily actions, and are promoted by them, there is not the leaſt reaſon to imagine that they are forbidden us. What would give offence to men, who ſee nothing but our external behaviour, and draw on us the cenſure of affectation and hypocriſy, to God, who looks into the heart, and knows the agreement between our thoughts and our actions, is not at all diſpleaſing.

On the contrary, his will is that we ſhould take the utmoſt freedom that is conſiſtent with the reverence we owe to him, and is fitted to excite, or expreſs a vehemence of holy love, and correſponding emotions of ſoul. And particularly, as to the exactneſs of method or expreſſion in our Secret Prayers we need not be ſolicitous. It is highly congruous, that in Publick we ſhould have regard to the ſentiments of others, and to their notions of decency, and utter nothing that may prejudice them againſt the duty itſelf, or the perſons who are the guides in it; but the ſame reaſon does not hold, when we are alone by ourſelves. Here indeed we

we ought to avoid careleſneſs and negligence, and ſhould not be guilty of groſs improprieties, when we might eaſily avoid them. Expreſſion ſhould not be ſo altogether overlooked, as to betray the leaſt diſreſpect to the preſence of God, and want of awe and watchfulneſs in our approaches to him. Nor will this really fetter us, ſo as to hinder us in the due freedom of our words, or even in any freedom that we can deſire. Prayer is more the language of the heart than of the mouth, and where there is a true fervour of ſpirit, it is graciouſly accepted, though the manner of phraſing our petitions be not the moſt accurate. God is not offended with the wrong placing of a word or a ſentence, ſo long as the main end is anſwered; ſo long as the meaning and the diſpoſition are good, and what miſtakes we fall into are either the effects of our not knowing better, or of the earneſtneſs and importunity with which we pray. Now this freedom which you ſee is to be found in Secret Prayer, is certainly a very great privilege. We may be perfectly eaſy, when God alone is our witneſs, and have little to concern ourſelves about, but the frame and poſture of our ſpirits; let theſe be right, and every thing will follow of courſe, as far at leaſt, as is neceſſary to the obtaining the divine favour.

III. Se-

III. Secret Prayer may with more eaſe be adapted to the ſtate and circumſtances of particular perſons. Every one may ſuit his Prayers to the diſpenſation of Providence he is under, or the temper of mind he is in; to the condition of his temporal or ſpiritual affairs. This, in Publick Prayer, is abſolutely impracticable. Every one hath ſome perſonal concern of his own, his peculiar wants, and doubts, and temptations; he hath his ſeparate petitions to make, and his ſeparate thanks to return, together with others that are common. The Miniſter, or whoever elſe is the mouth of the company, cannot be ſuppoſed to know the exigencies of all preſent; or, if he did, would not be able to form his Prayer ſo as to comprehend them all. One here and there may find ſuch a happy coincidence, or agreement between the Publick Prayer, and his private caſe, that it could not have been better repreſented, if the perſon that prays had been inſtructed in it before-hand; but then as to others it is not ſo, nor with the ſame perſons at other times; for in this world our condition is extremely variable, the face of the heavens is not more inconſtant than that of our minds. Our lives are filled with different events, and our breaſts with different paſſions, hope, joy, fear, ſorrow, perplexity, and a thouſand other viciſſitudes, ſome comfortable, and others

others afflicting. And in my Secret Prayers cannot I diverſify my requeſts, according to the diverſity of ſcenes that preſent themſelves to me? If my heart be full of the more agreeable ſenſations and paſſions, what ſhould hinder my giving them their full ſcope, and enlarging moſt in thoſe parts of Prayer that are moſt delightful, Praiſe and Thankſgiving? Is my ſoul caſt down within me, benighted with melancholy doubts and fears, ſo that I am not able to read the evidences of my integrity, and the ſpecial love of God towards me? What have I to do but lodge all my complaints with the Father of mercies; to plead with him, and expoſtulate with my own ſoul? Is there any ſin that prevails more than others, and breaks the peace and harmony of my life? I can direct my Prayer more eſpecially againſt that ſin. Or if I am afflicted and grieved in any reſpect, I can bring my caſe to God, and beg his help and ſuccour. What way ſoever my deſires incline, if they are ſuch as they ought to be, may I not lay them before him? And by the way, may not this be one proper method of trial, whether our deſires are regular in their kind or degree, to conſider if we ſhould not be aſhamed to give them a place in our Prayers? Every man beſt knows the plague of his own heart, and ſhould frame his Prayer and Supplication accordingly. [a]

And

[a] 1 Kings viii. 38.

And here, I hope, I ſhall not offend when I ſay that, were the expediency of Forms of Prayer at other times as great as it is ſuppoſed by ſome, yet one would think all ſhould be agreed in this, that it is not proper to tie ourſelves to them in our Secret Addreſſes. Not that I am He who ſhall condemn ſome perſons, thoſe particularly of very mean gifts, in the temporary uſe of them; or till by reading and exerciſe they arrive to a competant ability of expreſſing themſelves; or in a partial uſe of them afterwards, if they find any advantage from it. But what I ſay is, that we ought not, out of choice, to confine ourſelves to them, becauſe we ſhould hereby deprive ourſelves, in great meaſure, of one principal advantage of Secret Prayer, I mean the opportunity it affords us of complying with the preſent bent of our ſouls, and dwelling longeſt where they are moſt engaged. And this advantage will not be accounted ſmall, by thoſe who accuſtom themſelves to Secret Prayer. " O my ſoul, what a pleaſure is " it, when thy thoughts are ſerene and " peaceful, the ſtream of thy affections un- " troubled and unpolluted, thy hopes of " heaven ſtrong and lively, and thy title " to it clear, to call to remenbrance God's " favours paſt, to reflect on thy preſent hap- " py ſtate, and to look forward to that " perfect felicity, which is to be the portion " of

" of the faithful in another life; and then
" to bleſs God for theſe earneſts of glory,
" and to bind and to devote thyſelf to him!
" When thou art oppreſt with melancholy,
" and ready to ſink under thy burthen,
" what a relief is it to impart thy cares to
" thy beſt, thy almighty Friend, and to tell
" him that thou art reſolved to caſt them
" all upon him! I delight to mourn, and
" am refreſhed with my tears, when it is
" in the preſence of God that I thus la-
" ment myſelf, and I know that he is ever
" ready both to pity and help me."

IV. Secret Prayer prepares the way for more publick duties, which are never ſo well diſcharged, as when we have compoſed ourſelves for them by theſe retired exerciſes. After having ſought God in the cloſet, we ſhall be more diſpoſed to ſeek, and more likely to find him in the church. Publick Ordinances will profit us little, unleſs we ſet our hearts in order by the frequent and ſerious performance of private duties. The cloſet is the tiring room, where the ſoul dreſſes for the church; ſecret devotion trims the lamps of the ſanctuary, and makes them burn ſo much the more brightly. Secret and Publick Worſhip are indeed mutually helpful to each other, and the reaſon why we do not receive more benefit from them is, that we do not unite them, or are not

not so careful and vigilant in both, as we should be. Persons may thank themselves, that they go to the house of God, and do not meet him there; that they pray and hear, but experience little or no change in themselves, either as to sanctification or comfort. Let them be faithful to their souls, and examine whether this proceeds not from their neglect to speak to God *in Secret*. There can be little doubt, that it doth so frequently. Would we be occationally devout, we must be so habitually. No action is done with pleasure and advantage, till we have attained a facility of doing it. Without a habit of Prayer and Devotion, we shall find ourselves miserably unready, and when we would set about the service of God, shall not know how to do it, having nothing in order; like a Priest, who taking no care to prepare matters before-hand, cannot perform the sacrifice, for want either of the victims, or the utensils, or the sacred fire. But now, how can we arrive to such a habit without Secret Prayer? The distance between the times of Publick Worship is so great, that the impressions made on the heart are lost, because not often enough repeated. And besides, when we shew so much indifference for the presence of God, and communion with him, as seldom or never to retire from the world to give him a meeting, he very justly denies his presence, when

when we wait upon him in the Congregation; for he is in this ſenſe *a jealous God*, and will reject all ſuch worſhippers, as ſerve him only when they have nothing elſe to do. Make conſcience of Secret Prayer, and you will do the ſame as to Family Prayer, and the ſervice of the Sanctuary; you will need no other motive, but the pleaſure and ſatisfaction you have in theſe duties, and the gain you reap by them. Particularly, on the Lord's-Day, would you ſpend ſome time in your cloſets, in the examination of yourſelves, ſummoning together your ſcattered thoughts, reading of God's word, and applications to him by humble and ſeaſonable Prayer, you would quickly perceive the happy influence of this method upon the ſubſequent work of the day; and when the worſhip you paid to your Maker was only ſhifting the ſcene from one place to another, you might be ſure of finding God every where. "O my ſoul, the ſons of "God do this day preſent themſelves be- "fore the Lord, and I intend to be among "them! But ſhall this content thee to be "among them, if thou art not of them? "Do we not read of Satan's preſenting him- "ſelf before the Lord among his children? "May I not go and return as empty as I "went? To ſecure my welcome, I will "make a private viſit to the throne of grace, "and beg a bleſſing with the word that "ſhall

" ſhall be preached; both on them that " preach, and them that hear it. Having " thus beſpoke acceptance, I may be the more " confident of it." This was the practice of a certain eminently good man, of whom it is related, that as he was zealouſly affected in Secret Prayer, and by it ſanctified every day; ſo when the Sabbath came round, he would ſpend moſt of the morning in Secret Prayer and Meditation; and was wont to ſay, " we " many times blame the *Miniſter*, when " the fault is our own, that we have not " prayed for him as we ſhould have done."

v. By Secret Prayer we are very much aſſiſted in forming a judgment of our ſpiritual ſtate. Among the many marks that are given for the trial of uprightneſs, there is ſcarce any one more ſure and undeceiving, than conſtant application to the unſeen parts of Religion, and a general reliſh of them. *Job*'s friends, to make good the charge of hypocriſy, accuſe him of [b] *reſtraining Prayer before God.* The accuſation was falſe, but the ſuppoſition it went upon true, that it was very improbable he ſhould be a good man, if he made light of Prayer. And ſo in the 27th chapter of the ſame Book, the queſtion is aſked concerning the hypocrite, [c] *'What is the hope of the hypocrite, tho' he hath gained, when God taketh away his ſoul?*

[b] Job xv. 4. [c] Ver. 8, 9, 10.

ſoul? Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himſelf in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God? He may always call upon God in the Publick Aſſembly, where he hath the eyes of others upon him, but will he worſhip God in Secret, where there is no eye to obſerve him but his? Will he perſevere in this imployment, and delight himſelf in it? I am ſure it is not very likely he ſhould.

In all my actions, to which the world is a witneſs, I may be ſecretly ſwayed by a regard to the good opinion of the world, and in a much greater degree than I am aware of; but in religious privacy, what is there that can awaken my affections, and move me to be ſerious and in good earneſt, unleſs it be a ſincere deſire of approving myſelf to the great ſearcher of hearts? Can I not paſs my time without conſecrating ſtated portions of it to the God of my life; not ſlightly and careleſly but in a reverent and becoming manner? Have I marked the bent and motions of my ſpirit in ſecret devotion? And can I ſay that, ordinarily, my deſires after God are ſenſibly ſtrong, my heart united, and my thoughts fixed? In this caſe, there is nothing foreign and extrinſick to work up my paſſions, nothing to create an artificial devotion; it can be no other than the conſideration of the divine preſence that awes me, and the love of my duty

duty that allures me; and such an awful sense of God, and unfeigned affection to his service, must certainly, in concurrence with a holy life, (which I cannot but think doth almost inseparably accompany it) be a very good indication of a new nature, and a saving change. Let me not deceive myself with a shew of piety; all the appearances of it in publick may be no more; and it is certain are no more, when there is not a proportionable care to acquit ourselves of the duties of retirement; *not with eye-service as men-pleasers*, (which we too often are in the worship of God) *but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.* Is it after this manner that I serve God, in singleness of heart, and with fear and trembling? Perhaps I turn my back upon him, or put him off with a few cold and formal addresses; and as long as it is thus with me, would a favourable opinion of myself be any better than presumption?

VI. Secret Prayer hath this most precious promise made to it, *that our Father, who seeth in secret, will reward us openly.* In this motive to secret devotion, there is not a word almost but hath its weight, and deserves to be distinctly considered.

1. I pray to *my Father.* Blessed be that kind, inviting name! When God calls him-

ſelf *Jehovah*, I adore him. The contemplation of his ſelf-exiſtent nature, and the all-ſufficiency of his Being, ſtrikes me with a religious aſtoniſhment. When he ſtiles himſelf *my Father*, I cannot but love him, and draw nigh to him with confidence. Under what relation could he have repreſented himſelf, that carries in it more encouragement than this does? Had he made himſelf known only to man in innocence by this name, and afterwards laid it aſide again, there might have been ſome room for doubt; but, on the contrary, it is the ſtyle he hath aſſumed long ſince the fall. It is *ſinful man* whom he allows and commands to approach him as *a Father*. And, now that he hath given us this boldneſs of acceſs to him, ſhall we avoid him and flee from him? Read thoſe words of the Apoſtle, for they contain in them abundance of conſolation, [d] *Through him (Jeſus Chriſt) we both have acceſs by one Spirit unto the Father.* Here is *the Son* to intercede for us, *the Spirit* to aſſiſt, and, to compleat all, *a Father* to receive us. That he who is our Father, and the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, is likewiſe the Almighty and Everlaſting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, is ſo far from an argument to diſſuade us from coming to him, that it is an additional motive to come. He is our Father, and therefore

[d] Eph. ii. 18.

fore willing to help us, Almighty, and therefore able. " O heavenly Father, how a-
" mazing is thy condeſcenſion! How great
" my privilege! Thou haſt ſent thy be-
" loved Son, with a gracious invitation to
" preſent myſelf, and my petitions to thee.
" Nature dictates that I ought to pray to
" my Maker, and he, for my further ſa-
" tisfaction, tells me that I pray to *my Fa-*
" *ther*. What need of more importunity?
" I will do as my Saviour hath bid me. I
" will enter my cloſet, and there diſcloſe
" all my wants to *my Father*. He hath an
" ear to hear, a heart to pity, and an arm to
" ſave; and ſhall not I have a tongue to
" ſpeak? Merciful Father, compaſionate the
" ignorance, and pardon the perverſeneſs of
" thy child; draw me, and I will run after
" thee; conquer my reluctance, and diſ-
" perſe my fears, and inſpire me with filial
" love and boldneſs, that I may delight to
" come into thy preſence, not only with
" others but alone; to ſtand and kneel be-
" fore thee for thy bleſſing, to call upon
" thee, and to plead with thee!"

2. *My Father ſeeth in ſecret.* He is the Omniſcient God, preſent with all, and knows all. He that will judge the ſecrets of men cannot but be conſcious of thoſe ſecrets. He ſaw what the antients of the houſe of *Iſrael* did in the dark, every one in the chambers of his Imagery; though they were impious

enough to say, [e] *the Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth:* not less observant of those that secretly worship him, the true God, than he shews himself to be here of the secret worshippers of idols. He observes both in their chambers, one with delight, the other with indignation. And well may he know what is done in the inmost chambers of the house, when privy to all that passeth in the heart (which may likewise be called a chamber of Imagery, where a thousand little idols are forged, as well as kept) a place ten thousand times more concealed than the closet, and inscrutable to any knowledge but that which is infinite. See the cxxxixth *Psalm.* There is no danger when I am in my closet, and pray to my Father there, of my faring as the priests of *Baal* did, who though they called upon their God from morning until noon, saying, *O Baal hear us*, found him as deaf as the image that figured him. The God whom I serve is ever with me, in heaven and on earth at the same time, encircled with hosts of angels, and dwelling with men, present in the assembly of his saints, and with every contrite soul in his solitary hours. Some have thought the words of the Text might be rendered to this sense, "Enter "into thy closet, and pray to thy Father "who is in secret, that is, unseen by mor-"tal

[e] Ezek. viii. 12.

" tal eyes; and thy Father who is thus in-
" viſible, and yet beholdeth all things, ſhall
" reward thee openly." So that according to this turn of the words, there is an oppoſition in the Text between the *viſibility* of all things to God, and his *inviſibility* to all, in order to ſet forth the divine knowledge, and to prevent an objection which is apt to riſe in the carnal heart againſt the preſence of God with us, from his not being ſeen by us. He is, it is true, εν τω κρυπτω, hidden from our view, yet let us not therefore entertain a doubt, whether all things are naked and open to his. This conſideration of the divine Omniſcience is fruitful both of terror and comfort. Of terror to ſuch as abſent themſelves from the cloſet, or while there, leave their hearts to wander; for the God whom they refuſe to ſerve, or whom they ſerve thus negligently, knows every ſinful omiſſion and commiſſion of theirs. The ſame thought miniſters comfort to ſuch as come in faith, ſerve God though alone, with an active zeal, and dare not countenance a vain and trifling thought, any more than if every ſuch thought was to paſs under the review of a thouſand ſpectators. God ſees thy hands that are lifted up to him, and thy heart that bows before him; he is acquainted with thy good intentions, thy holy deſires, thy lowly thoughts, thy inward ſtruggles and

conflicts, thy agonies and temptations; and, seeing all these, he will accept and reward what is good in thee, supply thy necessities, assist thee in thy combats, and support thee under thy burthens. In a word, *he that seeth in secret will reward thee openly*; and this is the last thing observable in the motive.

3. *My Father will openly reward* my Secret Prayers, by his Grace shining in my conversation, his Providence interposing in my affairs; perhaps, also by procuring me the esteem and respect of men, as far as it is necessary to the comfort of this life that I should enjoy it, and consistent with my spiritual safety; and finally, will in the great day of account reward me in the presence of angels and men.

If I am constant and fervent in my Secret Prayers to God, he will reward me openly by his Grace shining in my conversation. After *Moses* had been upon the mount with God, the skin of his face shone. The glory of God, to which he had been an eye-witness, left a few of its rays upon him, which, though but a faint reflection of the divine splendors, were yet bright enough to dazzle the beholders. The devout Christian comes from his closet, as *Moses* from the mount, cloathed with beams of heavenly light. The sight he hath of God by faith is transforming, and, beholding the excellent glory,

glory, he is changed into the ſame image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of God. Holineſs is the moral luſtre of the uncreated Being, and a holy life is the luſtre of the Chriſtian; for whatever ſome may think whoſe ſenſes are too groſs to take hold of ſpiritual objects, the light of the ſun is not ſo beautiful and lovely as a good example. The very enemies of goodneſs are ſometimes ſtruck with it, and in ſpite of themſelves ſeized with a ſecret veneration at the ſight of it. God cannot honour a perſon more, than by communicating to him the Spirit of holineſs in its higheſt meaſures. This Spirit cannot be concealed, any more than a lamp encloſed in a globe of cryſtal, which darts its irradiations all around. And who ſo likely to have ſuch uncommon degrees of this Spirit, as thoſe who frequently converſe with God in the places and duties of his appointment; particularly in Secret Prayer, turning their eyes from earth to heaven, and impoſing ſilence on their clamorous paſſions, that they may ſee the glory of God in his infinite perfections, in his celeſtial habitation; and above all, in his Eternal Son, and may hear him ſpeaking to their ſouls in the ſtill whiſpers of his love? The effects of chriſtian retirement will appear in the ſweet compoſure of the paſſions, the evenneſs and affability of the behaviour, the

the charitableneſs of the temper, and the purity and tranquility of the life.

Again. *If I pray to my Father in ſecret, my Father, who ſeeth in ſecret, will reward me openly,* by his Providence interpoſing in my affairs, and leading me, as it were by the hand, in ways of peace and ſafety. He hath promiſed *to give his angels charge over the godly man, to keep him in all his ways; and they ſhall bear him up in their hands, leſt he daſh his feet againſt a ſtone.* " This gracious promiſe he will " make good to me. I ſhall be the object " of his paternal care; my ſteps ſhall be " ordered by him, and he will delight in " my way. Though he goeth by me, and " I ſee him not with eyes of fleſh; though " he worketh on the left hand, and I do " not behold him, and hide himſelf on the " right that I cannot perceive him, yet the " effects of his providential tuition ſhall be " viſible enough; I ſhall be able to trace " his footſteps, and to ſay that *God is here.*" The ſame holy perſon, of whom I had occaſion to make mention before, gives it as his experience, " that when he haſtened over the " duties of God's worſhip, out of a too ea- " ger deſire to follow his worldly buſineſs, he " did many times meet with ſome croſs in " his affairs; whereas when he took his ordi- " nary time, God did make his other buſineſs " to ſucceed the better; or elſe his mind was " brought

" brought to a quiet ſubmiſſion to the divine " will." Yet further,

My Father will reward me openly, by procuring me the good opinion, and the good will of men, as far as it is neceſſary to the comfort of this life that I ſhould enjoy it, and conſiſtent with my ſpiritual ſafety. This was the chief end of the *Phariſees*, in their oſtentatious Prayers, *to be praiſed of men*, but this muſt not be ours. What we are to be concerned for, is the approbation of God, and the diſcharge of a good conſcience, referring all other matters to him, who, the leſs ſolicitous we are about the judgments of other men in a way of vain-glory, will watch with the more care over our good name; ſo that, extraordinary caſes excepted, we ſhall not fail of a moderate ſhare of eſteem among our acquaintance, to be ſure not from the wiſeſt and beſt part of them, who are the only true judges of real worth. Honour ſhould follow, rather than be followed. Once more,

My Father, who ſeeth in ſecret, will in the great day of account reward my Secret Prayers in the preſence of angels and men; that will be the day of revelation, when the ſecrets of men ſhall be judged, ſecret ſins ſhall be puniſhed, and ſecret duties be rewarded. What is the good word of a ſmall number of perſons, whom I may have the art to deceive by an outſide of Religion,

ligion, to the honour which, ſuppoſing me to be ſincerely religious, I ſhall receive from that glorious aſſembly? The moſt inſatiable ambition cannot, one would think, deſire a larger fame than this. And yet even this, promiſed though it be to the good man, is not that which moſt enhances the value of Religion in his account, and gives him ſpirit and reſolution to perſevere; it is rather the conſequence of a religious courſe, than the aim of a religious man, whoſe views are directly to the glory of God, and to his own glory only as it is to be found in that. "This I know, that I ſhall receive my "crown, and that it ſhall be placed on my "head by the hand of my Judge; but what "pleaſes me moſt in this proſpect is, not "the publick nature of the ſolemnity (the "conſideration of the great number of ſpec-"tators moves me little) but that my crown "will be intrinſically weighty and valuable, "and that I ſhall receive it as a gift from "my Saviour." This finiſhes the ſecond general head of my Diſcourſe.

III. I proceed to conſider a particular caſe or queſtion, concerning the frequency of Secret Prayer. Here if it be aſked, how often we ought to attend upon this duty, I ſcruple not to anſwer, every day, and twice in the day. Some holy men we read, have prayed *three* times a day. So did *David*, *Evening*

[f] *Evening and Morning, and at Noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice.* And so *Daniel*, [g] *And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he aforetime did.* But whether this was their constant practice, from which they never varied, or only a custom, which they had taken up in compliance with the dispensations of Providence towards them; whether likewise their character and office, as *Prophets*, by which they were called nearer to God than other men, might not occasion their being oftener with God, cannot with any certainty be determined; for which reason, and because our circumstances may not admit of such a frequency, I do not insist upon it; leaving every one to act as conscience, inclination, prudence, and trial shall direct. The *Psalmist* saying, [h] *Seven times a day do I praise thee*, seems to mean no more, than that from a grateful sense of the divine loving kindness, he did often in the day lift up his soul unto God, and embrace every call to more set and solemn acts of devotion. The constant method of the saints, by all that we can judge of the matter, hath been to pray to God every *Morning* and *Evening*.

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[f] Psal. lv. 17. [g] Dan. vi. 10. [h] Psal. cxix. 164.

In this we have our Saviour for an example, of whom we read, *that he roſe a great while before day, and departed into a ſolitary place, and there prayed; retiring after the buſineſs of the day for the ſame purpoſe.* And in this ſenſe, moſt probably it is, that *Cornelius* is ſaid *to pray always*, that is, every *Morning* and *Evening*, in alluſion to the daily ſacrifice, which being offered twice every day, is therefore called [i] *the perpetual burnt-offering.* Nature indeed, hath in a manner fixed theſe two ſeaſons, of the beginning and end of the day, for Prayer and Praiſe; which makes the *Pſalmiſt* ſay, [k] *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to ſing praiſes unto thy name, O thou moſt High; to ſhew forth thy loving-kindneſs in the morning, and thy faithfulneſs in the night.* For why? *Day unto day uttereth ſpeech, and night unto night ſheweth knowledge.* The revolutions of light and darkneſs, the viciſſitudes of labour and reſt do, as it were, call upon men to acknowledge their Creator, whoſe wiſdom and goodneſs are ſeen in this eſtabliſhment; to commit themſelves to his protection, as often as they lie down in their bed, and to his bleſſing as often as they return to the imployments and works of the day; thankfully commemorating his kind and watchful Providence in both,

[i] Exod. xxix. 39, and 42. [k] Pſal. xcii. 1, 2.

both, and that tender mercy which is new to them every day of their lives.

As *David* was faithful to this method, ſo he hath left us, among others, two excellent *Pſalms*, which appear to have been compoſed, one of them for the *Morning* the other for the *Evening*. His *Evening* hymn we have in the eighth *Pſalm*, where he celebrates the ſingular favour of God to mankind, of which he takes notice as the more wonderful becauſe of the greatneſs and majeſty of God diſplayed in his works. *When I conſider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the ſtars which thou haſt ordained-- What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him!* He mentions the moon and the ſtars, becauſe it was now the time when they make their appearance; and whoever takes a view of the heavens in their night-dreſs, the moon ſhining in its brightneſs, and the ſtars ſparkling as ſo many rich jewels, will, if he conſiders theſe things with the pious temper of the *Pſalmiſt*, with him break out into admiration of the united power, and goodneſs of the Almighty Maker of the univerſe. The 19th *Pſalm* we may read as a hymn for the *Morning*; for there, ſpeaking alſo of the heavens, he makes his obſervation only on the ſun, who goes his progreſs alone, and in the fulneſs of his glory, permits not the ſtars to be ſeen. *In them hath he ſet a tabernacle*

tabernacle for the ſun, which is as a bride-groom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a ſtrong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and nothing is hid from the heat thereof. Glorious repreſentation of the Father of lights, whoſe quickening warmth and influences are diffuſed through all things, and ſupport and enliven the whole frame of nature!

And now need I uſe many words to perſuade you to the practice of ſo excellent a duty? I would hope not. Let thoſe, who have hitherto never repaired to their cloſets, but upon ſome worldly errand, learn from henceforward to put them to their beſt uſe; hereby, as it were, conſecrating them, and turning them into ſo many *Proſeuchæ*, or little Oratories. Let others who could not allow themſelves in the total neglect of Secret Prayer, but however have not minded it, as perſons that had any great love to it, be determined to perform it with more conſtancy, and greater intenſeneſs of affection. Let God have more of our time, and the world leſs. Would we be perfect, let us give attendance to Prayer, and abound therein with thankſgiving. Was any thing more neceſſary, than your recalling to mind what hath been already ſaid, in order to ſet home this exhortation, I could tell you, and ſhould have no difficult part to prove it too, that

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the happieſt of men are they, who lead a life of ſtrict holineſs, and regular devotion. The mind of man is a moſt infirm thing, and bends beneath any conſiderable preſſure, like weak and tender plants, if there be not ſomething without it, to lend it a ſtability; at leaſt is deſtitute of any principle that will afford it ſincere and permanent ſatisfaction. God is the only ſtay of the human ſoul, the only ſpring of true joy. A conſciouſneſs of his preſence, and aſſurance of his love, eſtabliſh the heart, and beget in it a calm and a delectation not to be expreſt. The ſoul, naturally fearful, becomes undaunted, and feels a ſtrength and courage that are not her own; as a loyal ſubject, fighting under the eye of his Prince, is ſtrangely animated by the royal preſence, forgets his fears out of an ambition to approve his fidelity, and eſteems death itſelf to be glorious in ſuch a cauſe, and with ſuch a witneſs. A pure refreſhing ſtream of comfort follows the holy aſcetick from the cloſet to the church, and from both through all the paths of common life. This delight ſprings not from his own breaſt, that is only the ciſtern to hold theſe living waters, while God himſelf is the never-failing fountain of them. The wicked God is able to puniſh with inward troubles and diſquietudes, and doth often puniſh them this way; putting ſtings into their conſciences, and daggers

into their boſoms; darkening their minds with clouds of wrath, and poſſeſſing them with unſpeakable anguiſh and horror; theſe are the proofs which the wicked and the indevout ſometimes have of the divine preſence, as terrible as thoſe of the devout and religious are delightful: to theſe he manifeſts himſelf in a very different manner, invigorating their reſolutions, ſoftening their cares, exalting their hopes, and dilating their hearts with gladneſs; ſo that, notwithſtanding the ſtorms of adverſity, life flows on in the main with a ſmooth and gentle current, till at length it mixes with, and is loſt in eternity of bliſs. This, I ſay, is the happy condition of thoſe who follow our Saviour's advice in the Text. God keepeth them as the apple of his eye; they lie down and riſe up, go out and come in under the ſhadow of his wing; they have a kind of familiarity with their Maker, they walk and aſſociate together, as one friend with another; this gives them a fixedneſs and ſerenity, which nothing elſe can beſtow, and hardly any thing can diſcompoſe; prepares them for all events, and fills them with a noble contempt of the world, and all things in it; this, or nothing, ſets them above the fears of death, when they conſider it, not as a baniſhment from what they love, but as a change greatly to be deſired, in the manner of enjoying the ſupreme object of their felicity, from faith

to

to ſight. The greateſt bleſſing of this life, and what infuſes a ſpirit into their other more common delights, is the liberty they have of approaching God; now the reaſon is much ſtronger, why the ſame thought ſhould reconcile them to death, which perfects the union, and places them once for all in God's immediate preſence and under the direct beams of his love.

I ſhall cloſe all with a few Directions, which, as they are not unneceſſary, I pray God may not prove unuſeful.

1. Reſolve that, unleſs in caſe of neceſſity, you will not wholly omit this duty. You may at certain times be indiſpoſed for it, or not ſo well diſpoſed as at others; your ſpirits may be dull, your thoughts cramped, your minds ſluggiſh, and every thing ſeemingly in diſorder and confuſion; yet ſtill, let not this prevail with you, to put it off to another time, under the notion of its being more convenient. Pray with as much life as you can, when you cannot pray with as much life and pleaſure as you would; better perform your duty after the pooreſt rate than not at all. When you cannot be lively, you may be ſerious; when you cannot be enlarged, you may be attentive. You may ſtrive with yourſelves when you can do no more, and God, who knows your infirmities, and ſees what a burthen they are to you, and how heartily you endeavour to get above them, will accept of the will for the

deed. Omiſſions are dangerous, and once you give way to them, no one can ſay where they will end. One neglect will make way for another, and that for another, till, perhaps, at length you can paſs over the duty upon very little temptation, and with no great uneaſineſs. By every omiſſion, you give the Tempter an advantage againſt you, and by frequent omiſſions will contract a habit of indifference and indevotion. O beware of ſuch a ſlothful ſpirit; it will inſenſibly gain upon you, and from the conſtant practice will lead you, by degrees, to the almoſt conſtant diſuſe of Secret Prayer.

2. Poſſeſs your minds with a deep ſenſe of the divine omniſcience. Confirm yourſelves in the belief, that God is always preſent with you, and hath his eye upon you, as well in the cloſet, as when you are acting on the ſtage of the world. Let not this awful truth loſe its efficacy and influence for want of conſideration; make the thought familiar to your minds, revolve it often, often reflect upon the uſe which you ought to make of it. Seriouſly conſider God as always preſent with you, and you will always behave as in his preſence; conſider him as ſeeing in ſecret, and you will be inclined to go aſide to ſome ſecret place, that you may meet him there. You will pray to this omniſcient God, and your Prayers will be more earneſt and collected. You will find the old ſaying to be

be true, *that you are never leſs alone than when you are alone*, ſince when you are moſt alone, the Father will be with you. When you are entered into your cloſet, and the ſoul is entered into itſelf; when you have cloſed your eyes, and your ears to creature-objects, then will God reveal himſelf to you, the veil of your fleſh will not be able to hide him from you, and the belief of his omnipreſence will ſo ſtrike and arreſt your minds, that they will be under very little temptation to wander.

I remember *Seneca*, a famous moraliſt, gives this rule, *Sic vive cum hominibus, tanquam Deus videat; ſic loquere cum Deo, tanquam homines audiant*; that is, "ſo live with men, "as if God ſaw; and ſo ſpeak to God, as if "men heard." This rule might not be very much amiſs at that time, when as he ſaith, men had ſuch unworthy thoughts of the Deities they worſhiped, that they would whiſper the moſt ſhameful requeſts to them; and, if they had a jealouſy that any one overheard them, would immediately ſtop, unwilling that men ſhould know what they made no ſcruple of telling their Gods. But for a Chriſtian, who is inſtructed in the doctrine of the divine Unity, and ſhould deſpiſe ſuch foreign aids, a much better rule is, to fix in his mind a right notion of God, as a Being of infinite greatneſs, purity, and perfection; and then by faith to preſentiate him to his thoughts, arguing thus---"If God be not preſent with

" me, to what purpoſe do I pray to him at " all in Secret? If he be preſent, as doubt- " leſs he is, to what purpoſe do I pray to " him with my lips, while my heart is far " from him? Such Prayers in his account, " who knows the emptineſs of them, muſt " paſs for none."

3. Pray to God for the Spirit of Prayer, and take heed that you do not quench it. You will never pray acceptably, unleſs in ſome ſenſe, *you pray with the Spirit*, that is, by the aſſiſtance of the Spirit, purifying and exalting your deſires, and guiding your requeſts. This is a part of his office, to endite thoſe petitions, which it belongs to the Son, as Mediator of worſhip, to preſent. As well might the ſailor hope to be blown to the port by contrary winds, as we that our Prayers ſhould come up before God, even into his ears, that are carried downwards by a violent guſt of carnal affection, or at beſt not borne up by the breathings of the Divine Spirit. Now this Spirit is driven away by wilful ſin, and continued impenitency; the fogs of ſenſual luſt extinguiſh the ſacred fire. This Holy Spirit loves a clean and pure habitation; and, though he does not find the heart of man ſuch, makes it ſo, or in time retires. Where he is not the maſter, he will not be a gueſt; as how can you expect that he ſhould, when every moment he muſt receive ſome indignity or other, and

and see the advice and interest of a sordid passion preferred to his? Wherefore if you purpose to live in the habitual, comfortable discharge of Secret Prayer, *walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*; which leads to another Direction very nearly connected with this.

4. Watch unto Prayer. My meaning is, that you should carefully observe whatever unfits you for your duty, and wisely prevent it. You cannot but know that there are a thousand things which unhinge, distract, and ruffle the spirit of the man, and of the Christian. Of this nature and tendency are a multiplicity of business, a swarm of earthly cares, indulgence to passion, vain conversation and delights, and unseasonable hours. How can the soul presently recollect itself, after it hath been dissipated in sensual converses? How compose itself after it hath been disordered by intemperate anger? How raise itself, after it hath been depressed and sunk with worldly anxieties? How be fitted to Pray, when it is hardly in a condition to exert any act of Reason? Would we discharge Family and Secret Prayer at night with profit to ourselves, and acceptance from God, let us take heed to ourselves, and to our conversation in the day; let us guard against intemperance of every kind; let us keep our hearts in good temper; let us retire to our houses, and to our closets in due time, and not delay till

every other place is weary of us, and no company is left for us, but men of ſcandalous characters, or none of the beſt. In the *Morning* let Prayer be one of the firſt things that we apply ourſelves to; let us ſeaſon our minds with it, and give ourſelves to God before the world hath taken poſſeſſion of us.

5. Watch after Prayer. Take notice what effect your Prayers have upon your temper and your conduct; whether you are more heavenly-minded, more charitable, more ſtrict, more circumſpect; how God anſwers your Prayers, and what returns you make to him again. There may be danger too of your being aſſaulted by your ſubtle enemy, after you have been on the mount with God, and having ſome ſnare laid for you at your ſtepping out into the world, which ought, in all prudence, to make you more cautious; eſpecially, if at any time you have had more than ordinary vouchſafements, and flows of joy. Be not high minded, but fear. You ſhould revive the memory of your experiences, your vows, and your requeſts. Tho' the words we utter in Prayer be ſoon diſperſed and loſt in air, yet this ought not to be a fit reſemblance of the little care we take to keep our Prayers, as to the general ſcope of them, in remembrance. We ſhould not contradict ourſelves, and while we requeſt one thing, practiſe another, build with one hand, and pull down with the other, but ſhould walk

walk worthy the honour we have, in converſing ſo freely with the great King of heaven and earth, the marks we have had of his favour, and the Petitions we have lying before him. Let it be ſeen that we are better every way, and in every relation, for our conſtant obſervance of this command of our Saviour.

6. Pray in the ſpirit of charity. The Chriſtian's Prayers may be private, but ſhould not be ſelfiſh. When by yourſelves in the cloſet, call to mind that you are not by yourſelves in the world; that you are members of a civil and religious ſociety and of the catholick church; and accordingly labour to unite yourſelves with them by love, and tender their intereſts as your own, *making Supplications, Prayers, and Interceſſions for all men.* You ſhould pray as a Parent or Child, as a Huſband or Wife, as a Maſter or Servant, as a Brother, a Friend, a Neighbour, a Subject, a Proteſtant, a Chriſtian, a Man; all theſe names will ſuggeſt to you for what things you ought to pray in regard of others. Tho' abſent from your chriſtian brethren in body, you ſhould be preſent with them in ſpirit, and, by a mutual exchange of good offices this way, ſhould endeavour to benefit one another. He that never, or ſeldom prays for others, is not ſo likely to be heard for himſelf, his Prayers proceeding from a narrow contracted ſpirit, which is not the true

ſpirit

ſpirit of Chriſtianity. The *Lord's Prayer*, which ought to be regarded as the Chriſtian's Directory, in the main parts of Prayer, whether alone, or in publick, begins with an invocation of God, under the notion of a common Father; which may teach us this much, that even in our Secret Addreſſes, where we do not expreſs ourſelves in the plural number, ſaying, *Our Father*, we ſhould yet conſider him as the God and Father of all mankind, and more peculiarly of all good men: and, in that, of *ſeven* Petitions, whereof the *Lord's Prayer* is made up, the *three* firſt are of a publick nature. Are we not from hence to learn, that our requeſts, for the advancement of God's kingdom and intereſt in the world, ſhould have their due room allowed them, and be placed foremoſt in the notion we have of their importance, when they are not ſo in the verbal order of our Prayers?

7. Ordinarily join reading with your Secret Prayers, and, at proper ſeaſons, meditation too. That I call a proper ſeaſon for meditation, when you either need it very much, or are happily diſpoſed for it, and the time will allow of it; you will ſoon find the good effects of ſuch a method. The ſame Scriptures that direct you to Pray, will ſupply you with proper matter and expreſſions for Prayer, and have a ſingular fitneſs to kindle, and cheriſh the ſpirit of devotion.

And,

And, as for meditation, it will be of use to rally the scattered thoughts, to put our minds into their proper situation, and to prevent our forgeting any thing, which ought to have a peculiar place in our Prayers. To conclude.

Lastly. Quicken yourselves with the consideration of death and judgement.—" Were " these awful objects before me, these last " and most important things more in my " thoughts, for certain I should be another " sort of person than I am, and act after " another manner. I should be ready to " every good work, and particularly to works " of godliness, and abundantly more serious " in them. I must shortly die, and when that " moment comes, which shall I think the " wiser, a life led after the pleasurable and " distracted way of the world, or one divided " between the duties of my general and par- " ticular calling? Which is the best prepa- " ration for death? Which will afford me " most comfort in it? Which is most likely " to secure me a happy state after it? After " death, I must come to judgement. O my " soul, I must charge thee not to forget that " day! I must be judged for omissions, as " well as commissions; for secret, as well as " more open sins; for the manner and end " of my religious duties, as well as concern- " ing my observing or neglecting them. How " may I have confidence and rejoicing in " that day? If I forget God, or serve the

" world

" world more than I do him? I cannot think " ſo. To ſeek mercy now is the way to " find mercy in that day. To delight in " God, and in his preſence and worſhip, and " praiſe him in his courts, to draw nigh to " him in ſecret, and to behave myſelf in my " general courſe ſuitably to my profeſſion, " my Prayers, and my hopes, it is this, and " this alone, that will aſſure my heart, ſo " that I ſhall not be aſhamed before my Judge " at his coming."---In a word, frequently think of death and judgement, and you will not be able to allow yourſelves, either in the neglect of any known duty, as particularly this of Secret Prayer, or in a flat and careleſs manner of performing it.

TWO

ESSAYS

ON

PRAYER,

Viz.

I. Concerning the rational Grounds of Prayer in general. And,

II. Concerning the Qualifications neceſſary to render Prayer an acceptable ſervice.

ESSAY I.

Concerning the rational Grounds of the duty of Prayer in general.

IF it be inquired upon what *ground* Reason inſtructs, and God commands us to Pray, may we think it is the neceſſity of Prayer to inform God of our wants? By no means; for as much as that Being who knoweth all things, cannot be ignorant what things we need before we aſk him. Is it that by Prayer we may hope to extort from God thoſe favours, which of himſelf he is not willing to beſtow? This too is impoſſible; ſince, being infinite in goodneſs, he can never want a will to communicate happineſs to his creatures whenſoever, and in what degree ſoever, his unerring wiſdom judges meet and proper; and, being unchangeable in his perfections, and conſequently in his purpoſes, he cannot be prevailed on, by our much ſpeaking, to do any thing that he would not willingly do. Shall we ſay then that Prayer is regarded *merely* as a proper trial of

of our obedience, and diſplay of the divine ſovereignty? Not ſo neither; for though it be a ſufficient reaſon to *oblige* us to Pray, that God requires it, and a ſufficient motive to *encourage* us, that he will hear us when we call upon him, yet this is not *all* that can be ſaid on behalf of this part of Religion. Prayer is not a *Poſitive Inſtitution*, like the Ceremonies of the *Law*, or the Sacraments of the *Goſpel*, but immediately founded in the relations between God and us, the diſcoveries he hath been pleaſed to make of himſelf to us, and the nature and circumſtances of the preſent ſtate. It is, in itſelf conſidered, a reaſonable ſervice, hath an apparent congruity in it, and viſible tendency to promote the moſt valuable ends, viz. the glory of God, and the happineſs of man. This the following conſiderations will abundantly demonſtrate.

1. A ſtrong and diſtinct apprehenſion of the Being, Perfections, and Providence of God, is what we ſhould all of us ſeriouſly endeavour to have our minds continually poſſeſſed with. Nothing can be more juſt and proper than this, becauſe nothing can be more needful, nothing can be more beneficial; the foundation of a religious life being laid in right notions of the Deity, preſent to the mind, and fixed deep in it. But now, whether it be at all probable that they who by an habitual omiſſion of Prayer

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ſay to God, *Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways,* ſhould have right notions of God, and much more right affections towards him, and a right behaviour under the influence of ſuch notions and affections, may be left to every conſidering perſon to judge. Is it a thing to be ſuppoſed, that they who never pray to God, will in the courſe of their lives ſet him always before them? That they will think of an inviſible God as preſent with them at all other times, who have no ſet and ſolemn ſeaſons when they place themſelves more expreſsly in his preſence, and offer up their addreſſes to him as preſent, and ready to hear and anſwer them? Would we look to him that is inviſible, conceive of him as about our path and our lying down, and acquainted with all our ways; as preſent every where, and every where directing and governing the courſe of things; as more eſpecially concerned to obſerve the actions of mankind, in order to a future judgement; would we do all this? Is it our real purpoſe and deſire? We muſt then accuſtom ourſelves to the duty of Prayer, ſince, in ſuch a world as this, where we are ſurrounded with objects that are continually intruding upon our minds, and are fitted to fire and engage our paſſions, it is in vain to think of walking with God all the day, and all our life long, if we never converſe with him in Prayer. And as we

muſt do this that we may ſucceed in our deſign, ſo in caſe we really have any ſuch deſign we ſhall do it. The true reaſon why perſons go from day to day without Prayer, is becauſe they have no ſuch formed deſign as this. It is very far from being their chief deſire, their ruling purpoſe, to make God preſent with them by a lively faith, and ever to behave as in his preſence. If they have any deſign, it is directly contrary to this, to flee at the greateſt diſtance from God, to avoid all thoughts of him, and to live as without him; and if they cannot ſo far unlearn the natural language of Reaſon, and the inſtructions of Education, as to be able to ſay in their hearts *there is no God*, yet they are ready to aſk, how ſhould God ſee what is done here below? Is not heaven his habitation, and will ſo great a Being ſtoop to behold the children of men, and to take part in their mean affairs?

Where Prayer is not at all practiſed, I believe ſuch reaſonings as theſe are not uncommon; whereas, on the contrary, by a conſciencious diſcharge of this duty, we ſhould confirm and awaken the rational dictates of our minds concerning the omnipreſence and omniſcience of God, and his univerſal Providence; univerſal over the whole world, and ſpecial over his church and people; and eſtabliſh our hearts in the belief of what the ſcripture hath taught us in relation

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to the ſame important truths. Being often in the divine preſence, and pouring out our hearts before God, we ſhould fix in ourſelves an habitual perſuaſion of his being the ſearcher of our hearts, and knowing all things; we ſhould attend more to the operations of his hands, conſider the ways of his Providence, labour to approve our actions in his ſight, and regard him at once as our refuge and our judge; all theſe things are very fit, and becoming reaſonable creatures; it becomes them to cheriſh in themſelves right apprehenſions of God, his eternal exiſtence, and infinite perfections, as having all power and all knowledge, as being moſt holy, juſt and good, poſſeſſed of every excellence that can render him an object of veneration and love. This is moſt fit and becoming; and muſt it not for this very reaſon be a thing highly juſt, that we ſhould pray to this God? In Prayer we acknowledge and celebrate theſe perfections, we revive the ideas of them in our minds, we beg of God to imprint them deep there; and thus by uſe and length of time theſe objects ſo remote from ſenſe appear ſtill more and more real, and carry with them a greater force and efficacy.

11. Is it not reaſonable, that being dependent creatures, we ſhould maintain on our minds a lively and conſtant ſenſe of our dependence; and, for as much as this is not to be done where Prayer is neglected, that we

ſhould therefore give ourſelves to Prayer? Neither of theſe things can well be denied. Can any one deny it to be a moſt reaſonable thing, that dependent Beings as we are, ſhould be ſenſible of their dependence, that is, know ourſelves to be what we are; which we do not unleſs we know ourſelves to be dependent on God for life, and breath and all things? This being our real ſtate, can we without a crime be ignorant of it, or not conſider it, or not be affected with the reflection upon it? Moſt certainly, ſuch an ignorance of ourſelves and our condition, or regardleſneſs of it, would not be ſuitable to our character of reaſonable Beings, and therefore could not be innocent.——This then is undeniable, that we ought to have a lively and conſtant ſenſe of our dependence upon God. And is there any more room to deny that, in order to have this juſt ſenſe of our dependence upon God, it is neceſſary we ſhould preſerve it on our minds, by frequent Prayer to the God of our lives? This I think is very evident, and what may be put out of all diſpute by appealing to experience. Who are they that ſeldom or never reflect on the neceſſitouſneſs of their condition, and the numerous evils to which they ſhould be expoſed a helpleſs prey, having little knowledge and leſs power of their own, if the world was not the charge of a kind and watchful Providence; that are

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no more moved with theſe things, than if their condition was exactly the reverſe to what it is? Who are the perſons that live thus eſtranged from themſelves, and from the thoughts of their frail nature, and indigent circumſtances; who but thoſe that live without Prayer? Can a man that hath his regular returns of Prayer live after this manner? Or can that man be ſuppoſed to live otherwiſe who never prays? Is not ſuch a temper of mind the natural and unavoidable effect of a life in which Prayer hath no part? The conſequence is ſo certain, that every one who is a ſtranger to Prayer, may be called in for a witneſs of it. "I am told that God is the ſtay of my "Being, and the fountain of all my enjoy-"ments; but, O, I muſt confeſs, it is what "I have ſeldom thought on, and never laid "to heart as I ſhould have done; was never "thoroughly touched and penetrated with a "ſenſe of it, tho', when I ſeriouſly put the "queſtion whether things are not ſo, my "reaſon cannot withhold its aſſent!"——

This reaſoning holds ſtill more ſtrongly of that dependence we have upon God, in regard of the ſpiritual and divine life. This life is a hidden life, not only as to the ſpring, but the ſupplies of it too, unſeen; for which reaſon, when men do not draw off their minds from ſenſible things and attend to ſuch things as relate to the ſoul,

the immortal principle within them, its diſorders, weakneſſes, dangers; wherein conſiſts its proſperity, and what beſpeaks it to be on the decay, which is always the caſe of perſons unaccuſtomed to Prayer, they are apt to treat theſe things as mere viſions and chimeras; and yet it is certain, there are no greater realities than theſe, both the life itſelf, and the intercourſe between the uncreated Spirit and the ſpirits of men, by which it is maintained. Our Religion makes frequent mention of this life under different terms, ſuch as *the life and image of God*, *the renovation of the mind*, *a new creature*, and the like; and teaches us to aſcribe the origin, continuance, vigour, and perfection of this life to a divine operation and influence; things of the nature and neceſſity of which, the ſoul that caſts off Prayer, will be very unlikely to have any tolerable idea; the conſequence of which cannot but be threatening: for tho' notwithſtanding our having no clear conviction of our dependence upon God for this bodily life, and the good things of it, and never acknowledging it, God may ſee fit, upon other accounts, to give and continue theſe to us in the common courſe of Providence, yet the caſe is very different as to the gift of the Spirit, and bleſſings of a ſpiritual and ſaving kind, which there ſeems to be an apparent unfitneſs for God to beſtow on

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perſons that have little or no ſenſe of their need of them, or of their coming from God, and therefore never aſk them of him.

III. Natural light teaches the neceſſity of repentance, where perſons have ſinned; that is, of godly ſorrow for ſin, and an effectual purpoſe and diſpoſition of ſoul to forſake it. This *Reaſon* teaches; and the ſame *Reaſon* ſhews the neceſſity of Prayer to promote repentance. Ought we not, after having violated our infinite obligations to God by tranſgreſſing his holy commandments, to be unfeignedly ſorry for it, and deeply humbled under the ſenſe of our extreme folly and ingratitude? But, unleſs our eye poureth out tears unto God, and our heart lay itſelf open before him by confeſſion and humiliation, how can it be expected that we ſhould feel any workings of an ingenuous ſorrow and ſhame, or that they ſhould not ſoon vaniſh again? The preſence of God, into which we come by Prayer, like that of a friend, a benefactor, a father, towards whom we have acted a perfidious, an unkind, an ungrateful, or undutiful part, awakens conſcience, and fills the ſoul with ſecret confuſion. Beſides which, confeſſion of ſin ſeems to be a natural expreſſion of ſincere contrition for it; and ſo likewiſe Prayer to God, that he would forgive us, of a real concern and ſolicitude to be forgiven. So that a perſon whoſe ſoul is humbled within

him, will not be able to forbear caſting himſelf down at the feet of that adorable Majeſty, againſt whom he hath offended; being truly penitent, he will, by a kind of irreſiſtible impulſe, be carried to deprecate that diſpleaſure which he hath deſerved, and to implore that mercy which he hath abuſed and forfeited, but is miſerable if he cannot obtain.——And then further, as repentance ſignifies the forſaking of ſin, it is moſt evident that Prayer is one principal means of it, contributing to the ſinner's converſion from a courſe of vice and wickedneſs, and in general to the forſaking of any ſin, and a greater freedom from the power and dominion of it. For it is hardly to be ſuppoſed that men ſhould from day to day make ſuch confeſſions, offer up ſuch requeſts, and enter into ſuch ſolemn engagements, as are implied in the Prayers of a ſinful creature convinced of his ſinfulneſs and wretchedneſs, and yet be ſatisfied to go on in the ſame courſe of life, committing without ſcruple thoſe ſins which they confeſs and reſolve againſt; and gratifying without any conflict thoſe irregular deſires and inclinations, which they lament and implore the divine ſuccour to enable them to ſubdue. The reflection upon ſuch an unreaſonable conduct, ſuch a manifeſt contradiction between their Prayers and their lives, will cover them with ſhame and confuſion; they will have no eaſe in their

their minds, no manner of ſatisfaction, till they act more agreeably to their Prayers. To which this further conſideration ought to be added, that our deſires of freedom from ſin, how weak ſoever they are at firſt, by being frequently expreſt in Prayer will gather ſtrength; and in proportion as our deſires after this bleſſed liberty are encreaſed, our endeavours will be more conſtant and unwearied; as the iſſue of theſe, joined with an humble dependence on the Grace of God, cannot but be happy.

IV. Prayer hath a natural tendency, (under the divine influence, which muſt be always ſuppoſed) to produce an habitual ſeriouſneſs of ſpirit, and ability to govern our thoughts and paſſions; which is the beſt preparation to a devout life, or a ſteady courſe of piety and virtue.—The pains we take to collect our thoughts, and compoſe our minds, when we are about to ſpeak to God in Prayer; and much more the care we are obliged to, during the whole performance to keep our hearts with all diligence, to the intent we may not offend the God we worſhip by a trifling unguarded poſture of ſoul; this care and pains we imploy about our thoughts and paſſions, before and in our Prayers, will be likely by time and uſe to leave ſuch impreſſions on our ſpirits, as to beget a habit of ſeriouſneſs, and to render it much leſs difficult for

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us to maintain the poſſeſſion of ourſelves, and a wiſe ſobriety of thought at other times. He that is accuſtomed every day to ſet his heart in order, to reduce his wandering imagination, and his ſtragling deſires, to awe his ſoul with the conſideration of the divine preſence, and to calm the agitations of his paſſions, as every one muſt be who makes conſcience of Praying to God every day, and of diſcharging his duty in an acceptable manner; every ſuch perſon will be leſs liable to vanity of mind, to a looſeneſs and diſſipation of ſpirit, and irregular workings of the paſſions, than others who are under no ſuch reſtraint, who have no ſuch ſolemn times for the regulating their thoughts and paſſions, but day after day permit them to go without examination and without controul. Now this habitual ſobriety of ſpirit, which is the natural conſequence of Prayer rightly perſormed, is one of the beſt preparations to a courſe of ſteady virtue and piety in the life. For why is it that our lives are ſo full of breaks and interruptions? That we are carried away by the views of ſenſual pleaſure, or of worldly gain? And, in our converſations, do ſo frequently forget that we are Chriſtians, or act as if we had fogotten it? Why is all this, but becauſe we are ſtrangers to that habitual ſerioufneſs and compoſure of ſpirit, which was before deſcribed, and ſhewn to proceed from the conſtant

ſtant and faithful performance of the duty of Prayer? It being manifeſt that this ſettledneſs of heart would be attended with a greater conſiſtency and uniformity in the life. Our whole conduct in this caſe would look more like one act of Religion, tho' conſiſting of ſeveral ſcenes or parts, and in our greateſt relaxations we ſhould be ſecretly ſwayed and influenced by the principles and rules of our holy Religion.

v. Prayer is admirably adapted to exerciſe and improve thoſe ſeveral virtues, on which the credit of Religion, and the pleaſure and happineſs of the religious, do moſt viſibly depend; ſuch as *divine love*, *gratitude*, *truſt* in the Providence of God under all the trials and viciſſitudes of the preſent life, *contentment*, *hope* in the mercy of God for whatever relates to our ſpiritual and everlaſting welfare; *heavenly mindedneſs*, or fervent aſpirations of ſoul after that fulneſs of joy which is in the preſence of God, and thoſe rivers of pleaſure which are at his right hand for evermore; and, to add no more, *charity---Divine love* deſervedly appears in the head of this ſacred band; *love* to the author of our Beings, the center of all perfection, and fountain of all good; than which ſurely nothing can be more reaſonable. And tho' this flame is kindled from above, yet what more apparent than that it is done by Prayer, as the chief inſtrumental

ſtrumental means? That devotion which ſhould mingle in all our Prayers, conſiſts moſtly in the exerciſes of this ſublime affection; and in order to have our ſacrifice conſumed by this fire of the altar, we do in our converſes with God ſet ourſelves to contemplate his lovelineſs and his love, his unbounded goodneſs and its numberleſs effects. The breath of Prayer fans this holy fire; we are naturally led to love that God by whom we are allowed this freedom of acceſs, and in whoſe preſence we find ſuch ſweet contentment and reſt. And, as in other caſes ſo here, the friendſhip and endearment between the Creator and the creature, are increaſed with the increaſe of their acquaintance. "O *Love*, thou offſpring of hea-
"ven, why is my heart ſuch a ſtranger to
"thee? Why does it experience no more
"of thy quickening influences, thy inex-
"preſſible delights? Have I not too much
"reaſon to think it is becauſe I am not more
"frequent and earneſt in my Prayers? Did
"I ſtrive more with this dull and cold heart
"of mine, to raiſe and warm it in my ad-
"dreſſes to the ſupreme Being, I ſhould
"ſoon perceive the good effects of this me-
"thod; I ſhould love God with more fer-
"vour, and ſerve him with more dili-
"gence."

That diſpoſition of ſoul which we call *gratitude*, ſo near a-kin to *love* that it may

may properly enough be made a branch of it, a virtue of a moſt heavenly nature as well as extraction, is greatly promoted by the ſame means. For though the duty of Prayer hath its name from the *petitioning* part, yet ought to conſiſt of *thankſgiving* too, and is very imperfect where *thankſgiving* hath not ordinarily a pretty large ſhare, in the heart at leaſt, if not in the outward form and mode of words. *Thankfulneſs* looks back to mercies paſt, which it regiſters in the memory, and engraves in the heart; while Prayer, ſtrictly ſo called, looks forward to mercies yet to come. Which account of *thankfulneſs* or *gratitude*, ſhews it to be a virtue of eminent dignity, and indiſpenſibly neceſſary to our pleaſing God, in our applications to him for mercy; ſince it can never be ſuppoſed he will continue to ſhower down his favours, when they are as rain falling on a rock, on which it makes little or no impreſſion, or as treaſure thrown into a great gulph, where it is ſwallowed up and loſt. The expreſſions of a thankful heart appear from hence to be as neceſſary as they are ornamental to our Prayers; and *thankſgiving* encreaſes that *thankfulneſs* from which it proceeds. The habit of *gratitude* is improved by frequent acts; and, conſequently, by a devout and conſtant practice of Prayer, in which we are ſo plainly invited, and ſo ſtrongly obliged to acts of praiſe. And whereas

whereas it may be thought poſſible for men to be thankful to God for his mercies, who never pray to him for them, this is evidently a miſtake. Bleſſings not received in the way of Prayer, would be looked on as coming in the natural courſe of things, without the deſign and direction of God; or we ſhould not be able to avoid ſuſpecting our title to them; and ſuſpecting this, we ſhould not ſo clearly diſcern the kindneſs and love of God in them, which is the very thing that muſt infuſe life and ſpirit into our thankſgivings.

Truſt in the Providence of God, under all the trials and viciſſitudes of the preſent life, is likewiſe very much indebted to the conſtant returns of Prayer, performed in the beſt manner we are able. This *truſt* in God (which is nothing elſe but the general belief of his Providence applyed, and reduced into practice) is to be exerciſed in a diſtinct and explicit manner, when we preſent ourſelves before the throne of divine Grace, and, by being thus continually exerciſed, is much ſtrengthened and improved. The various diſpenſations of Providence are of uſe to encreaſe our *truſt* by the neceſſity they lay us under of exerting it, according to the changing nature of our condition; there being none who ordinarily excel ſo much in this virtue as thoſe who have paſt through the greateſt diverſity of outward events, and experi-

perienced the goodneſs and faithfulneſs of God in them all; after much the ſame manner as thoſe ſoldiers are moſt ready in handling their arms who have been kept under ſtrict diſcipline, and conſtantly exerciſed. But then this benificial influence of Providence on our *truſt*, is only when Prayer goes along with it; which is one reaſon, that, where the diſpenſations of Providence are much the ſame, in regard of two or more perſons, the effect is ſo very different; one continuing as reſtleſs and diſtruſtful as ever, while another learns to commit himſelf with a more intire confidence to the diſpoſal and conduct of his heavenly Father. One of theſe perſons lives in the neglect of Prayer, or is regardleſs how he prays; the other is much in Prayer, and carries the ſame regard to God, and confidence in him, which he exerciſes in this duty, into all the circumſtances of his life, and every part of his converſation.

The conſequence of this is, that the man who gives himſelf to Prayer will be contented in the condition and circumſtances allotted him, whatever they are. He hath often and very ſincerely begged of God to do that which is beſt for him, and hereby wrought himſelf into a humble and ſtedfaſt *truſt*, that he would grant him his requeſt; when therefore the event declares what the will of God is, he cannot but be eaſy under it,

it, becauſe he knows that it ſhall turn to his good, let the preſent appearance of things be never ſo unpromiſing. The Chriſtian that is moſt in Prayer will of courſe be moſt contented; he will pray himſelf into a quiet reſigned frame, as well as obtain it as the recompence of his piety and devotion. Now contentment with what we have, in a world where we cannot, and it is not fit we ſhould have all we deſire, is the neareſt approach to the happineſs of the heavenly ſtate, which conſiſts in having none but reaſonable deſires, and all theſe deſires crowned with enjoyment.

It is further certain, that Prayer nouriſhes *hope* in the mercy of God, for whatever relates to our ſpiritual and everlaſting welfare. In being called to Prayer, we are called to *hope*; for to what end would Prayer be without *hope?* And as we are in a ſpecial manner to pray for thoſe things that concern the ſalvation of our ſouls, and our happineſs in another life, ſo we muſt of conſequence be allowed to *hope* for them. This *hope* which is authorized and encouraged by the very command to pray, does from the duty of Prayer, frequently and carefully performed, receive a continual and conſiderable acceſſion of life and vigour. Our *hope* it may be at firſt is languid and wavering, and mingled with ſo much fear and anxiety, as deprives us of all ſenſible comfort and relief from it; how

however, though ſmall, our *hope* is that which prevails with us to pray and not faint; and, perſevering in Prayer, we find that our *hopes* recover ſtrength, till they come to be more rooted and abounding, ſo as to ſtay our ſouls, and preſerve them calm and peaceful in the views of eternity.

A heavenly frame and diſpoſition of mind naturally reſults from the ſerious and conſtant diſcharge of this duty. For what elſe is Prayer but an abſtraction of the mind from preſent ſenſible objects, in order to its being turned towards thoſe of a different and a nobler nature; the raiſing the ſoul from earthly to heavenly things? The God we ſerve is an inviſible Being; and the chief bleſſings we implore at his hand, have little or no relation to this viſible world: hence it proceeds that the mind in Prayer gradually riſes to a ſpirituality of temper, hath other reliſhes and inclinations, and is to be ſatisfied with no happineſs but one that is ſpiritual and divine; a happineſs ſuited to its own nature, and to the nature and perfections of the ſupreme Being; whom by continual ſupplications to him as the author of its felicity, it learns to regard as the object of it too; with ardent longings crying out, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee.* "Thou "art my portion, O Lord, as ſuch I chuſe "thee! O that I knew where to find thee,

" that I might come even to thy ſeat! This " is what I muſt deſpair of while I am here; " I therefore long for a more perfect ſtate, " in compariſon with which I deſpiſe this " ſcene of vanity, with all its empty and " tranſitory enjoyments." It is by this, among other means, the ſoul comes to be diſengaged from the world, to ſet its affections on things above, and to carry higher views, and more generous ſentiments into the management of common affairs than worldly minds are capable of; thus having its converſation in heaven, where it hopes to have its everlaſting abode.

Prayer widens the heart, and fills it with the moſt diffuſive charity or benevolence. Being uſed to pray with or for others, we unite ourſelves to them in the bonds of the moſt tender affection, as children of the ſame common parent, and ſharers in the ſame common happineſs. We love them as we love ourſelves, that is without diſſimulation; look upon their intereſt as our own, and, in that view, ſincerely deſire it, rejoyce in it, and as we have opportunity promote it. Now, next to the love of God, what affection is there that more exalts and adorns our nature, than the love of mankind, a univerſal and diſintereſted love? Or how can any diſpoſition of mind give us a nearer reſemblance to the Deity? *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God*

God in him. Nor is this excellent affection more influential upon the happineſs of others than it is on our own; it is a moſt pleaſing ſenſation, and whereſoever it is a gueſt, pays richly for its entertainment. That we may feel the power of ſo amiable and agreeable a paſſion, let us in our Prayers as unfainedly recommend others to the divine mercy as we do ourſelves. This is one condition of an acceptable Prayer, that we harbour not envy, and malice, and revenge in our boſoms. Prayer will help to kill theſe poiſonous weeds, and cultivate and improve that love which is the original growth of our nature, being planted in it by the hand of God himſelf; this love will languiſh or revive with the ſpirit of Prayer and devotion.

I ſhall add but one conſideration more.

VI. The expediency of Prayer may be argued, from its tendency to engage us to the diligent uſe of all neceſſary and proper means for the attainment of our deſires.——The diſpoſition and purpoſe to imploy our faculties and abilities in the beſt manner we can, have been elſewhere conſidered as one qualification of an acceptable Prayer. Here we conſider the actual vigorous application to the work which God hath given us to do, as an almoſt inſeparable effect of Prayer, when it is ſincere and perſevering. We ſhall be aſhamed of perpetually contradicting

the language of our Prayers by that of our actions; declaring in one our earneſt deſires of things which we expreſs an utter indifference to in the other; promiſing the utmoſt care and vigilence, and in the general courſe of our lives uſing little or none; and begging the bleſſing of God upon endeavours, which we never exert. We ſhall not be able to bear the reproaches of our minds under ſuch an inconſiſtency between our Prayers and our ſubſequent behaviour. Prayer regularly performed will inſpire the love of every virtue, cure us of our ſloth and indolence, convey ſtrength and vigour into the ſoul, and effectually diſpoſe us to keep and exerciſe a good conſcience in the ordinary affairs of life. We ſhall pray for nothing improper; and what we dare pray for, we ſhall reckon ourſelves obliged to do all in our power, by prudence, and honeſt induſtry, to obtain; referring ourſelves to the Providence and Grace of God for the ſucceſful iſſue of all.

Such being the excellent nature of the duty of Prayer, ſuch the rational grounds of it, and its moſt beneficial effects, it is no wonder that God ſo frequently commands it, and hath made ſo many promiſes to it in the Scripture Revelation. The more reaſon we have for Prayer, the greater ſhould be our readineſs to this duty, and our delight in it. The authority of God ought not to be our only inducement, but his goodneſs too

too in obliging us to purſue our own perfection and happineſs, and annexing ſo many additional encouragements to a thing which hath in its own nature ſo much to recommend it. The reaſon of the thing, the command of God, and the rewards promiſed to the conſtant diſcharge of this and other duties, are each of them ſingly ſufficient to engage an ingenuous and conſiderate mind; and yet all of them, with their united influence, not too much, under the preſent weakneſs and diſorders of nature, and amidſt ſuch numerous temptations as this life abounds with; happy will it be, if all together do not fail of their effect.

" O God, thou art my God, early will " I ſeek thee, and in thee alone will ſeek my " happineſs, convinced that I can never " find it in any thing beſides thee! Haſt " thou given me leave to approach thy pre- " ſence, and ſhall I flee from it? Alas, whi- " ther? Does my Reaſon point to thee, and " ſhall my heart be averſe from thee? For- " give me, O my God, that when thou " doſt ſo kindly invite and encourage my " addreſſes to thy throne, I am ſo little ſen- " ſible of thy great goodneſs and condeſcen- " tion, and my own unſpeakable privilege " herein! Forgive that indifference and in- " devotion which the many vaſt advantages " attending the faithful performance of my " duty render innexcuſable. Yes, O Lord,

" I gladly acknowledge that in keeping thy
" commandments there is great reward, and
" that whatever thou haſt made my duty
" is conducive to my higheſt intereſt! Help
" me to diſcern this more clearly, and to
" conſider it more ſeriouſly, in reſpect of
" all thy precepts; particularly, the obliga-
" tion I am under to preſent myſelf and my
" ſupplications to thee; that fixing my eye on
" thoſe moſt valuable ends to which Prayer
" is ſo manifeſtly ſubſervient, and which can-
" not be attained without it, and having the
" deſires and inclination of my ſoul ſuitably
" influenced by thy Grace who haſt the hearts
" of all men in thy hand, and turneſt them as
" the rivers of water are turned, I may at once
" yield thee a more reaſonable and a more
" chearful ſervice. I could never think
" it was for thy own ſake, that thou com-
" mandeſt thy creatures to pour out their
" hearts before thee in Prayer. I now plainly
" ſee, it is for their profit, that they may be
" partakers of thy holineſs. Grant, O Lord,
" that for the time to come I may ſerve thee
" with a filial reverence, delight to approach
" thee, and to commend myſelf by frequent
" and fervent Prayer to thy guidence, pro-
" tection and bleſſing, and do every thing
" whereby I may ſecure thy gracious pre-
" ſence! And thus walking in the light of
" thy countenance, and, by an uniform
" courſe of piety and devotion, continually
" grow-

" growing up to higher degrees of perfec-
" tion in every divine virtue and attainment,
" let me pass the time of my sojourning
" here, till from thy earthly footstool thou
" shalt call me nearer to thy throne, where
" I shall be capable of paying thee nobler
" homage; and, after the service and suffer-
" ings of a short life, enjoy thee as my ex-
" ceeding great and everlasting reward,
" through Jesus Christ my worthy Mediator
" and Advocate." *Amen.*

ESSAY II.

Concerning the Qualifications neceſſary to render our Prayers acceptable to God.

THE importance of this ſubject being out of diſpute with all thoſe who really deſire God's acceptance of their Prayers, the following things are laid before them, for their ſerious conſideration.

1. Prayer, to be acceptable to God, muſt be performed by one in a ſtate of favour with him, or in ſome preparation and diſpoſition of ſoul towards it. Say I this only from my own thoughts, or does not the Scripture ſay the ſame? [a] *The ſacrifice of the wicked* (the moſt pompous and coſtly offering he can make) *is an abomination to the Lord; but the Prayer of the upright* (the Prayer, though no ſacrifice attends it) *is his delight.*

[a] Prov. xv. 8.

delight. And so again in the 29th verse, *The Lord is far from the wicked; but he heareth the Prayer of the righteous.* And the *New Testament* speaks the same language, [b] *Whatsoever things we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* But here a thought will almost unavoidably arise; if the sacrifice, or Prayer of the wicked be an abomination to God, and only the Prayers of men of upright heart meet with a gracious audience, where is the obligation on the unconverted to pray? Or to what purpose should they trouble themselves about this duty? If a man must pray that he may be converted, and yet till he is converted his Prayers are abominable, how is it possible his Prayers should ever be of any use to free him from the wretched state he is in? The answer is not far to seek, *viz.* that the qualification before mentioned as essentially necessary, is not that a man be actually in a state of Grace, or actually converted, but that he be at least in some preparation or disposition towards it. The wicked, whose sacrifice is declared to be an abomination, are such as retain their enmity against God and godliness, such as are neither reconciled, nor willing to be so, neither possessed of the treasures of divine Grace, nor desirous of them, but are bent upon their evil ways, and

[b] 1 John iii. 22.

and reſolved to gratify their luſts whatever it coſts them; ſuch as theſe preſent their offerings with hands and hearts ſo defiled, that it would be moſt unreaſonable for them to expect God ſhould have the leaſt regard to any thing they do; and indeed, for the greater part they do not ſo much pray out of any ſuch expectation, as from other views, or becauſe they have been accuſtomed to do it. But then, for the encouragement of others it is added, *that the Prayer of the upright is his delight.* Now as there are ſeveral degrees of uprightneſs, ſo the loweſt of them may hope for an anſwerable ſhare in the divine acceptance. Whatever be a man's preſent ſtate, if he hath ſincere deſires, though weak, of becoming a better man, of making his peace with God, and practiſing his whole duty towards him, and theſe deſires are the ground and principle of his Prayers, he is ſo far upright, and ſo far in the ſtate he ought to be in; that is, he is in a ſtate of preparation, which every one muſt be, that is not regenerated, before that change can paſs upon him; regeneration not being the work of an inſtant. The broken ſighs of a contrite heart are heard with favour and pity, the feeble and imperfect ſtruggles of the ſoul towards the new birth are graciouſly regarded, and aſſiſted by the merciful God who is a witneſs to them.

11. It

11. It is neceſſary that we ſhould pray with unfeigned humility, which we can hardly avoid doing, if we conſider as we ought the infinite greatneſs and majeſty of God, or reflect upon our own extreme indigence and great unworthineſs

" Will God indeed dwell on the earth? " Behold the heaven, even the heaven of " heavens cannot contain him! The nations " to him are as the drop of a bucket, and " are counted as the ſmall duſt of the bal- " lance in his ſight, who metes out the hea- " vens with a ſpan, and comprehends the duſt " of the earth in a meaſure; the whole cre- " ation is a very little thing. What then is " man who is a worm, and the ſon of man " who is a worm? May we that are but " duſt and aſhes take upon us to ſpeak to " the moſt high poſſeſſor of heaven and " earth, lift up our eyes to the place where " his honour dwelleth, come near before " him, even to his mercy-ſeat, and with the " freedom of children make known our re- " queſts unto him? And how profound then " ſhould our humility and reverence be, to " anſwer to this moſt aſtoniſhing condeſcen- " tion? Or who can forbear crying out, " *What is man that thou art mindful of him?* " *And the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him?* "

That we may be yet further convinced of the reaſon we have for humility, when we approach the divine preſence, we ſhould think

think again how extremely indigent and neceſſitous we are. Shall we ſay, we have need of nothing? When, alas, without his power ſupporting our Beings, his bounty ſupplying our wants, his grace helping our infirmities, we neither are, nor have, nor can do any thing. Are not our wants continually returning, inſomuch that the merciful hand of God being ſhut up, which hath hitherto relieved us, if we would not otherwiſe be brought to acknowledge our neceſſities, we ſhould be forced to do it by our own feeling? That we may be filled with the fulneſs of God, it is fit we ſhould ſee and confeſs our own emptineſs. We ought to be ſenſible of our helpleſs condition as we are creatures, Beings whoſe all depends upon the will of another, who have not their good in their own hand, nor the power to foreſee or avert the numerous evils that beſet the preſent life, expoſed to great dangers, and that part of them to the greateſt which is infinitely more valuable, eaſily deceived, ignorant, defenceleſs, and mortal. Thus indigent is our condition as creatures, ſituated in a frail body, and a mutable world; and much more as *fallen* creatures; for as *fallen*, we have new wants and weakneſſes, and conſequently new petitions to make when we come to God in Prayer. We need mercy for the pardon of our ſins, grace to heal our diſeaſed natures, ſtrength to vanquiſh temp-

temptations, and to perform the duties of the chriſtian life, and the conſolations of the Spirit to calm a doubting and fearful mind. Ah, how can we expect that God ſhould compaſſionate our condition, when we are not affected with it ourſelves?

If all this will not teach us to pray with humility, let us call to remembrance our great unworthineſs; and then we ſhall be ready to ſay, or ſee reaſon to ſay, as the Patriarch *Jacob*, and with the like lowlineſs and ſincerity, [c] *that we are leſs than the leaſt of all God's mercies*; indigent and helpleſs, and deſerving ſo to continue. We muſt not think to barter with God for his benefits, and to deal with him on the foot of merit; that is not the way to ſucceed; at beſt we are unprofitable ſervants, when moſt faithful and diligent, and are taught to acknowledge that we are ſo, even though we ſhould do all thoſe things that are commanded us, becauſe, after all, we have done but what was our duty to do; whatever we do being done by powers which have their whole being and vigour from God, to whom we can give nothing but what was his own before. But, alas, this is not the worſt of our caſe. Was this all, our *unworthineſs*, we ſhould be no otherwiſe unworthy than the muſt pure and the moſt exalted of God's creatures are ſo, who by all their ſervices cannot enrich him ſo

[c] Gen. xxxii. 10.

ſo much as the ſmalleſt rivulet does the vaſt ocean with its tributary waters. Ours is not a ſimple incapacity of meriting at the hand of God, but ſuch a want of merit as is attended with demerit more than enough. We have forfeited the goodneſs of God, miſimployed his gifts, or not imployed them as we ought, been unthankful for his mercies, unfruitful under them, and guilty of numberleſs tranſgreſſions, in which we have broke through numberleſs ties and obligations. Had we a ſtrong and habitual ſenſe of theſe things upon our minds, pride would not find it ſo eaſy a matter to inſinuate itſelf into our religious performances, and ſink the value of them; but we ſhould be able to offer to God the ſacrifice of a contrite and humble ſpirit, which he will never deſpiſe.

III. In an acceptable Prayer the attention of the mind muſt conſpire with the devotion of the heart. Some degree of attention is neceſſary. We ought to mind what we are doing, and with whom we have to do; otherwiſe our Prayers will be no more than the labour of our lips, and in praying we ſhall not pray; for that is not Prayer which is not performed with the mind; and it is not performed with the mind, if the mind be abſent, and taken up about other things. The thoughts are the attendants that muſt wait at the altar, while the ſacrifice is offering;

offering; as a devotion kindled from above, is the fire that must consume it. Every thing that discovers inattention, while we are speaking to men, is esteemed a mark of disrespect; and, surely, what no one would like in a fellow-mortal, our equal, and much more our inferior, we should all carefully avoid being guilty of in the presence of the great and omniscient God. A sudden excursion of the thoughts, not frequent, nor allowed, and no sooner perceived than checked, will be pardoned by him who knoweth our frame, and the many infirmities that encompass us; but the habitual and unrestrained wanderings of a vain mind have no excuse. And as our hearts are to be united, so in some good degree devout. With a recollection of the thoughts, there is to be a warmth of the affections, as far as it is in our power; and indeed one of these will very much facilitate or prepare the way for the other. After we have gathered in our thoughts in the performance of holy duties, and centered them, in the best manner we are able, on God and divine things, our hearts will be more likely to catch the sacred flame; [d] *While I was musing the fire burned.* The difference of natural tempers must be allowed for; and so I doubt it may, and yet no apology be left for those who have no stirrings of love to God, while they are praying to him, no breath-

[d] Psal. xxxix. 3.

breathings of holy desire, no sensation of delight, no emotions of gratitude. To be thus cold and lifeless, and indifferent, is, I fear, a bad symptom in any, because it seems to argue that they are so by consent, are no ways solicitous about it, nor willing to be at any pains to bring themselves into a better temper. When this is the usual state of our minds, we are too liable to the same charge as those of old, *Of drawing near to God with our mouth, and honouring him with our lips, while we remove our hearts far from him.* The mercies of God, the happiness of being in his favour, the loveliness and the love of Jesus, and the superior excellence of heavenly and eternal things, will naturally beget agreeable passions and sentiments in the pious soul, desire, hope, love, joy, zeal, and thankfulness.

IV. The matter of our Prayers is to consist of such things as we have ground to think are agreeable to the will of God. [e] *This is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* Now this demonstrates the necessity of our having some knowledge of the different nature and importance of things, and of our own case, that we may not pray amiss, which a man, ignorant or inconsiderate, is in great danger of doing. And forasmuch as spiritual blessings, or the things that accompany salvation, such

[e] 1 John v. 14.

as peace with God, and conformity to him, a good conſcience, order and tranquility of ſoul, a capacity of ſerving God in this world, and meetneſs for a better; foraſmuch as theſe and ſuch like bleſſings are the only things that are abſolutely and eternally good, good in all circumſtances, and for all perſons, and not thoſe that relate only to the happineſs of the body, and the preſent life, we ought not to pray abſolutely for any other; and theſe being good things of a higher kind, and of infinitely greater moment, we ſhould endeavour to have our minds ſo poſſeſt with a ſenſe of their exceeding great worth and ſignificancy, that our concern for obtaining them may, in ſome due proportion, exceed our care about other things.

v. That we may be accepted we are to pray with a kind, charitable, and forgiving ſpirit, merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. How elſe can we aſk, and expect to find that mercy which we will not ſhew? Hath not our Saviour himſelf told us that upon any other condition than this our Prayers will be unavailing? [f] *When ye ſtand praying, forgive if ye have ought againſt any, that your Father alſo who is in heaven may forgive you your treſpaſſes: but if you do not forgive, neither will your Father that is in heaven forgive your treſpaſſes.* And ſo again, *Forgive, and ye ſhall be forgiven. Give, and* [g] *t ſhall be given unto you.* And a very reaſonable

[f] Mark xi. 25, 26. [g] Luke vi. 37, 38.

able condition this is, or none can be ſo, to imitate the mercy we implore. We not only pray that God would forgive us our treſpaſſes, but that of his free and overflowing goodneſs he would grant us ſuch things as we have need of. Our power indeed of doing good bears no proportion to his, nor their guilt who have injured us to the guilt of our offences againſt God; but what is the inference from hence? Why, that we ſhould with ſo much the greater readineſs afford others all the help we can, and forgive them, if they have offended us, as their guilt towards us, and the help they received from us is comparatively ſo little, and God gives and forgives ſo much.

VI. To pray acceptably, it is needful that we pray in faith; that is, that we be perſuaded of the knowledge, wiſdom, power, faithfulneſs and mercy of God. We muſt believe that God perfectly knows the ſtate of our caſe, our deſires, and our needs, what we would have, and what is fit and convenient we ſhould have, and this much better than we know it ourſelves; that being infinite in knowledge, it is impoſſible he ſhould be ignorant of any thing, and as impoſſible that he ſhould be miſtaken in his judgement of any thing, whether it be good or evil, expedient, or inexpedient, becauſe he is infinite in wiſdom. We muſt believe that to God all things are poſſible; that his power

is without bounds, not to be controuled by any oppoſite force, or ſtopped and non-pluſed by any difficulty; that he cannot be more merciful than he is conſiſtently with his other perfections, inſomuch that if the perſon be a proper object of mercy, and his caſe really pitiable, he never wants a will to ſhew mercy; that as he hath made many gracious promiſes, ſo he keepeth truth for ever, and will not in the leaſt tittle be worſe than his word; this is the *Prayer of faith*, which Chriſtians of all times are equally concerned in; ſo that if in this ſenſe we do not [h] *aſk in faith, nothing wavering*, we are forbid to think that we ſhall receive any thing of the Lord. There is another ſort of faith of which we read in ſcripture, and very common in the age of miracles, a faith that was not ſo much a ſaving *grace*, as an extraordinary *gift*. Of this faith our bleſſed Lord may be ſuppoſed to ſpeak, at leaſt principally; [i] *What things ſoever ye deſire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye ſhall have them.* By the hands of the Apoſtles, and others of the firſt preachers of the Goſpel, were many ſigns and wonders wrought among the people; and when it pleaſed God that any ſuch miracle ſhould be performed, the perſon choſen to perform it was by an extraordinary impulſe upon his mind excited to attempt it, and aſſured of ſucceſs; which is the ground that this

[h] Jam. i. 6, 7. [i] Mark xi. 24.

this *Prayer of faith* is called δεησις ενεργουμενη, the [k] *effectual fervent Prayer*, we render it; whereas it ſhould rather have been the *inwrought*, or *inſpired Prayer*. So that the faith was firſt wrought, and then the miracle.

From theſe and other like paſſages of ſcripture, ſome Chriſtians, at beſt not ſo judicious as well-meaning, have thought themſelves warranted to boaſt of a *particular faith* in Prayer, by which they mean a perſuaſion, and even aſſurance while they are praying, of their being heard in the particular thing they aſk; ſo that, if others can as eaſily believe them as they truſt to a warm imagination, they know beforehand what will be the iſſue: or if they do not pretend to have this faith, they are ſatisfied others have it, and apt to queſtion whether it be not their own fault, that they have it not. But I would gladly be informed, where ſuch a faith as this is required as a *duty*, or promiſed as a *privilege*. They may almoſt as well lay claim to a power of working miracles, as to have *ordinarily* this faith which is ſo near akin to miraculous: I ſay, *ordinarily*, for how far upon ſome very extraordinary occaſions God may communicate himſelf to perſons of uncommon meaſures of piety and goodneſs, giving them intimations of his deſigns and purpoſes, and ſhewing them the things that ſhall be, I will not determine; but ſuch extraordinary vouchſafements are no

[k] Jam. v. 15, 16.

rule for us to go by in our own practice, or in judging of the pretenſions of others. The faith we are obliged to exerciſe in Prayer, is a faith in God's perfections and promiſes; and whereſoever there is this faith, our Prayers ſhall not be rejected for want of any other: as for inſtance, of the particular faith now mentioned, or a faith that hath rather ourſelves than God for its object, tho' too often miſtaken for that faith without which no man can be ſaved; I mean, an aſſurance that God will beſtow his ſaving mercy upon us, ſince this depends on the opinion we have of ourſelves as proper objects of this mercy, which we may think we are not, when we have no ſufficient foundation for ſuch uncharitable thoughts of ourſelves; and God that knoweth them that are his, will not deal with us according to the judgement we paſs upon our own integrity, but his infallible judgement of it, which therefore ſhall be deciſive.

VII. Nothing can juſtly be expected from thoſe Prayers, which are not accompanied with a ſincere diſpoſition and reſolution in the offerer, to do all he can in the uſe of proper means for the obtaining of the good things which he prays for; otherwiſe he mocks with God and deceives his own ſoul, and, whatever Grace he receives, is in danger of receiving it in vain. That ſingle inſtance which we are furniſhed with from the *Lord's Prayer*, is

is an abundant proof of this; where we are taught to pray that God would *give us day by day our daily bread.* Now it is hardly ſuppoſeable that any one hath ſo little ſenſe as to underſtand this of God's communicating the neceſſary ſupplies of this life in ſuch a miraculous and extraordinary way, as when he rained Manna from heaven upon the *Iſraelites* in the wilderneſs, and commanded the ravens to feed *Elijah*; but we readily apprehend the thing meant is, that God by his ſecret influence of bleſſing would make natural cauſes to produce their uſual effect, proſper our prudent care and honeſt induſtry, and grant us to enjoy the good of all our labour. So that here is ſuppoſed the concurrence of our own powers and faculties with the Providence of God.

And this will direct us in the right underſtanding the other petitions, in which we expreſs our deſires, *that the name of God may be hallowed*; *his kingdom come*; *and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven*; *that he would forgive us our treſpaſſes*; *and not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* For what leſs do theſe ſeveral petitions intimate, than that we are to endeavour to put ourſelves in the way of every mercy we requeſt, and, according to our little ſphere, help on the deſigns of God? That we praiſe, and honour, and worſhip God, profeſs and practiſe the true Religion, and promote the

intereſt of it in the world, as far as we are able; to imitate the angels of light in their ready and univerſal obedience to the divine will; by unfeigned repentance qualify ourſelves for pardoning mercy; be ſober and vigilant, that we may not enter into temptation, and by all due caution and reſolution ſeek to preſerve ourſelves from the ſnares, and to repel the aſſaults of the evil one; to keep off the evil of ſin, and every other evil to which we are liable? All this is evidently implied; which proves the dangerous tendency of thoſe notions which repreſent men as having no power in working out their own ſalvation, unleſs they are acted and carried on by a Grace which they cannot reſiſt; and all thoſe endeavours, however ſincere, as of no uſe that are exerted by perſons not bleſt with thoſe over-powering influences. For what is the natural conſequence of this principle, but either men's neglecting to pray, under a pretence they cannot pray as they ought till the Grace of God works ſo powerfully upon them, that they cannot help doing it; or truſting to their Prayers for converting and eſtabliſhing Grace, without uſing any care and endeavours of their own for this purpoſe. And if it ſhould be ſaid, that praying to God that he would do this and that for us, is a demonſtration of our own utter impotence, it muſt be owned to be a very good proof that the ſucceſs of

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our endeavours is humbly and gratefully to be aſcribed to the Grace of God, but is no proof at all of the uſeleſsneſs of theſe endeavours: they might as well argue, that becauſe we pray to God for temporal good things, therefore nothing we can do is of the leaſt advantage to procure them. And indeed were it not that men love their bodies better than they do their ſouls, and are more pinched with the wants, and ſenſible of the dangers of the former of theſe than of the latter, they would be apt to draw the ſame concluſion in both caſes. In a word, we are to remember, that as often as we intreat God to guide, and protect, and quicken, and aſſiſt, and comfort us, we are, under him, to be our own directors, guardians, monitors, helpers, and comforters, as far as the faculties and opportunities he gives us will enable us to be ſo. By this means, Prayer will be a reaſonable ſervice, a ground of great ſatisfaction to the mind, and of a moſt happy influence in the courſe of the chriſtian, and even of common life.

VIII. In our Prayers let us not forget to pray as *Chriſtians*. Now in that character it is a fundamental rule, that [l] *whatever we do in word or deed, we do all in the Name of the Lord Jeſus.*——[m] *Through whom we have acceſs by one Spirit unto the Father.*——[n] *If earthly parents, being evil, know how to give good*

[l] Col. iii. 17. [m] Eph. ii. 18. [n] Luke xi. 13.

good gifts unto their children; how much more shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Even [o]*the Spirit of his Son,* which he *sends forth into our hearts, crying Abba, Father*; forming us to a child-like temper and freedom of spirit, helping our infirmities, particularly in Prayer, and making intercession within us, while Jesus our Advocate, maketh intercession for us in heaven? *There is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*; one High-Priest of our profession, who, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood; and, having first reconciled us to God by the sacrifice of the cross, presents us to him (our persons and services) for his gracious acceptance. Our blessed Lord, being about to depart from his disciples, and return unto the Father, that he might not leave them comfortless, tells them, [p]*Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my Name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* And the writer to the *Hebrews*, after taking notice of our being sanctified by the blood of Jesus, exhorts us, [q]*By him to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his Name.* While Christ personally conversed upon earth, he was the great teacher of the church; we

[o] Gal. iv. 6. [p] John xvi. 23, 24. [q] Heb. xiii. 15.

we are now to regard him as our interceſſor; the [r] angel, out of whoſe hand (he anſwering to the High-Prieſt under the law) the incenſe offered on the golden altar, with the Prayers of all the ſaints aſcends before God. To him we are to have a vertual reſpect, when we do not actually make mention of his Name, grounding our hopes of mercy and eternal life on his mediation. Thus doing, we ſhall conform to the Goſpel conſtitution, expreſs a proper regard to the majeſty and holineſs of God, to whom we preſume not to draw nigh, but through a Mediator, and honour the Son whom the Father delighteth to honour.

IX. In Prayer, the glory of God is to be our ultimate end. The command is, [s] *Whether we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do, to do all to the glory of God.* And if this rule holds in all, to be ſure much more in thoſe actions that immediately refer to God. Now making the glory of God our end in Prayer, denotes *two* things—our deſire that he would glorify himſelf in his dealings with us—and our reſolution and promiſe to glorify him in the enjoyment of all his mercies. In the former of theſe our Maſter is our pattern, [t] *Father, glorify thy name. My ſoul is troubled*; beholding the ſcene of terror that is approaching; *and what ſhall I ſay? Father, ſave me from this hour*; ſo indeed weak nature prompts me to ſay; *but*

[r] Rev. viii. 3, 4. [s] 1 Cor. x. 21. [t] John xii. 28.

but for this cauſe came I unto this hour; verſe 27. *Father, glorify thy name.* "Since the "execution of thy wiſe and merciful deſigns, "requires this ſacrifice, and with theſe cir- "cumſtances, as I freely conſented to it at "firſt, ſo I freely make it now. This is "the deliberate purpoſe and act of my ſoul. "[u] *If thou be willing, remove this cup from* "*me; neverthelefs not my will, but thine be* "*done.*" In imitation of this moſt perfect example, let us pray with an entire ſubmiſſion of ourſelves to the divine diſpoſal; willing that God ſhould deny us, when it is for his glory, as it is our duty to deny ourſelves at his command. "Is it for thy glo- "ry, O my God, that I ſhould want this "or that comfort of life, ſuffer this or that "affliction, be liable to this or that tempta- "tion; only let thy Grace be ſufficient for "me (as it was for thy Apoſtle St. *Paul*) "and I chearfully ſubmit? I rejoice that "God is glorified in me, however it be, "whether by proſperity, or adverſity, by "life or by death, by granting my requeſts, "or ſeeming to reject them."

This is that reſignation which we ſhould all be diſpoſed to practiſe, when we offer up our deſires to God in Prayer; he expects it, and it is altogether reaſonable; but any ſuch hard, I might ſay impoſſible, proof of our love to him and zeal for his glory, as our being

[u] Luke xxii. 42.

being contented that he ſhould deny us, when we beg of him his favour and the life of our ſouls, he does not, he cannot, demand from us; and therefore this is a caſe we ought never to ſuppoſe. In reſpect of the enjoyment of temporal good things, or freedom from temporal evils, and even the joys and conſolations of Religion, however deſirable, a concern for the glory of God muſt over-rule our deſires of theſe things. And as we ought to pray with this reſerve, *if it be for the glory of God*, ſo with this view, as one motive to our Prayers, *that it will be for his glory to anſwer us.* It hath therefore been the method of the people of God in all ages to enforce their Prayers with this plea or argument, *that God would hear them for his name ſake*; that is, for the ſake of his perfections, and the glory redounding from the diſplay of them in his works. It is the glory of God to relieve the wants of his creatures, when they cry unto him, to ſatisfy the hungry ſoul with his goodneſs, to ſhew mercy to them who ſincerely endeavour to qualify themſelves for it, and to be the exceeding great reward of all that chooſe him for their portion and felicity; theſe and ſuch like things are for the glory of the beſt of all Beings; ſome of them always, and others ordinarily; and it ſhould be an additional incentive to our deſires, that they are ſo, diſtinct from the conſideration of our

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own intereſt and happineſs concerned in them. The other thing implied in making the glory of God our ultimate end in Prayer, is a reſolution to glorify his Name in the uſe and enjoyment of every gift or benefit he is graciouſly pleaſed to confer upon us, to the intent, that he may have the praiſe, not from us only, but from all others; to utter the memory of his great goodneſs, and to improve every mercy as a freſh engagement to greater zeal, activity, and chearfulneſs in the ſervice of our bountiful Lord and Maſter.

To conclude——Perſeverance in Prayer is neceſſary to crown the whole. We cannot be ignorant, that our Saviour ſpake a parable to this very end, that [w] *men ought always to pray, and not to faint*; that is, not to be diſcouraged, and give over praying, though all things ſhould ſeem to continue as they were; ſo as to tempt them to aſk, *what profit have we to pray to him?* Or to ſay, *verily I have cleanſed my heart in vain*, and *waſhed my hands in innocence*. A delay is not a denial; nor ſhould we think the delay too long, if we had the ſame knowledge of things that he hath, who is the ſupreme diſpoſer of them. *The Lord is a God of judgement; bleſſed are all they that wait for him.* To the ſame purpoſe is the Apoſtle Paul's exhortation, to [x] *continue inſtant in Prayer*. Of the duty itſelf we ſhould never grow weary, nor ceaſe entreat-

[w] Luke xviii. 1, &c. [x] Rom. xii. 12.

entreating God to give us thoſe mercies, in a particular and eſpecial manner, that relate to our everlaſting ſalvation; no temptation whatſoever ſhould prevail with us to do this; neither the ſuggeſtion of an *indevout heart*, that Prayer is a ſlaviſh and burdenſome ſervice; nor of an *ignorant, and fooliſh heart*, that it is needleſs; nor of an *unbelieving or deſponding heart*, that it is fruitleſs and unprofitable. The moſt imperfect ſouls cannot but have ſome pleaſure in offering up their ſincere deſires and praiſes to God; and the longer they perſevere, provided they pray in the beſt manner they are able, and keep a good conſcience in other things, together with their own perfection, the facility and pleaſure of religious duties will increaſe; if not that pleaſure which we may call *paſſionate*, yet that which conſiſts in a *rational calm, and ſatisfaction of mind.*

Prayer cannot be *needleſs*, was it for no other reaſon but that God expreſsly and peremptorily requires it; ſince what he ſo requires, nothing will excuſe us from performing: and the ſame conſideration evidently proves that it cannot be *fruitleſs*; for as much as the ſame God who commands the duty will not, both of his abundant goodneſs, and out of regard to his own promiſe, fail to reward the regular and conſtant diſcharge of it. What if God doth not anſwer our Prayers ſo ſoon, or in that way and manner

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that we ſhould chooſe? What if he ſees fit to try our faith and patience before he rewards them, agreeably to the nature of the preſent ſtate, which is a ſtate of waiting and probation? What if he doth not communicate all that light, and life, and ſtrength, and comfort which we deſire? Still we may depend upon it, that our Prayers, with the qualifications before mentioned, ſhall not go unrewarded, but procure us many bleſſings and advantages, preſent and future. God, by a ſecret influence, will eſtabliſh our hearts more and more, guide and uphold our ſteps, aſſiſt us in holy duties, ſuccour us in the hour of temptation, ſupport us under the burthens and afflictions of the preſent life, and make all things work together for our good. In a word, he will give us grace here, and glory and happineſs hereafter. Wherefore let us be ſtedfaſt and immoveable, always abounding in every duty, and particularly in this of Prayer, foraſmuch as we know that our labour in the Lord, and our Prayers to him, cannot be in vain.

A PRAYER.

O Thou that heareſt Prayer, the Almighty and Everlaſting God, to Thee ſhall all fleſh come! As a father pitieth his children, ſo, O Lord, thou pitieſt them that fear Thee; thou knoweſt their frame, thou remembreſt that they are duſt! While thy wiſdom and holineſs leave no room for impenitent ſinners to hope that thou wilt hear them, thou art pleaſed to incourage ſuch as are upright in heart, under all their failings and imperfections to put their truſt in thy mercy. Grant, I beſeech Thee, that I may have my mind deeply impreſt with a ſenſe of theſe and all other thy perfections, that in my whole behaviour, and more eſpecially in my ſolemn addreſſes to the throne of thy heavenly grace, I may be ſo influenced thereby as ever to glorify thy moſt holy Name. O let not this moſt bleſſed liberty which thou haſt given me of coming into thy preſence, and calling upon Thee as my Father in Heaven, be deſpiſed and neglected by me, or prove in vain for want of that ſincerity and humility, and faith, and cha-

rity, and devotion, and all thoſe good diſpoſitions, wherewith I ſhould bow myſelf before the moſt High God! Blot out all my offences, O moſt merciful Father, and uphold me with thy free Spirit! By thy good Spirit teach me how to pray; quicken and aſſiſt me in my Prayers; and grant that I may never forget to whom, and for what I make my requeſts; but may always have a lively apprehenſion of thy preſence, though inviſible, and of the reality, excellence, and infinite importance of ſpiritual and eternal bleſſings; that placing my happineſs in Thee alone, I may not vainly ſeek it in other objects where it is not to be found; nor be grieved and diſappointed, when outward things do not afford me that ſatisfaction which I ought not to expect from them. May I ſo pray as to live better at other times; and walk ſo holily and circumſpectly at other times, as to be in a better diſpoſition of mind to pray always, with all Prayer and Supplication, watching thereunto with all Perſeverance; being kept ſtedfaſt in the way of my duty, by the delight I take in it, and the tranquility and eſtabliſhment of ſoul I derive from thence. And thus let me go on in the regular uniform diſcharge of the duties of piety towards God, and charity towards man, till under the influences of thy Divine Spirit, being prepared by a life of faith and hope for a ſtate of

of vision and enjoyment, I shall be translated to those blessed and glorious mansions, where thou hast laid up for them that love Thee such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can enter into the heart of man fully to apprehend; where I shall not only be sincere in my devotions as now, but equal to the angels, according to my capacities, and with fervent everlasting praises celebrate that goodness which is boundless and endless. Let these my Prayers come up for a memorial before Thee, and be graciously accepted through the mediation of thy well-beloved Son, my only Saviour and Advocate, Jesus Christ.

A

DISCOURSE

Concerning the

NATURE and DESIGN

OF THE

LORD's-SUPPER,

IN WHICH

The principal things relating to this INSTITUTION are briefly considered; and shewn to arise out of one single notion of it, *viz.*

As a Memorial of the Death of CHRIST.

1732.

A

DISCOURSE

Concerning the

LORD'S-SUPPER.

THE *Chriſtian Religion*, contained in the ſcriptures of the *New Teſtament*, is ſo called, becauſe it is the Religion of *Jeſus Chriſt*, which he taught partly in his own perſon while he was upon earth, and more fully by his Apoſtles after his aſcenſion into heaven; from whence he ſent down his *Holy Spirit* upon them, to lead them into the knowledge of all truth, and, by the gifts of languages, and a power of working miracles, to enable them to propagate and eſtabliſh it in all the earth. Among many things which ſhew the great excellency of this Religion, not only above the falſe Religions of the world, but even that of *Moſes* himſelf, (tho' that alſo was from God) we are to regard this as none of the leaſt conſiderable, that it is *a moſt reaſonable and ſpiritual ſervice*, having

ing but *two* duties belonging to it, that are of a *poſitive nature*; that is, ſuch as might never have been duties, and would never have been ſo, without a particular and expreſs command of God for them; and theſe are *Baptiſm*, and the *Lord's-Supper*. The *outward action* in both theſe is of itſelf indifferent, and obliges only by virtue of its being enjoined by one, whoſe authority we have no room to diſpute.

By *Baptiſm*, they who had embraced the doctrine of ſalvation by Chriſt, took upon them the publick profeſſion of it, and were received into the number of his diſciples; as all thoſe, in like manner are, to whom *Baptiſm* is now adminiſtered. By communicating in the *Lord's-Supper*, we endeavour to keep alive in ourſelves, and to preſerve in the world, the memory of the divine Author of that Religion into which *Baptiſm* firſt enters us. This is a plain account of theſe *two* Goſpel-Ordinances, with regard to the firſt and moſt general deſign of each; the former hath a more immediate reſpect to the Religion itſelf which we profeſs, the latter to the Author of it, in remembrance of whom this Inſtitution of his is to be obſerved throughout all generations.

That men, having ſufficient evidence of the truth of the Goſpel, ſhould readily believe and entertain it, and believing it to be true, ſhould openly profeſs it, is a dictate of

of natural Reaſon; in other words, a moral duty; but the obligation they are under to declare and profeſs their faith by the particular ceremony of *baptizing with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*, doth not ariſe out of the nature of the ceremony itſelf, but is wholly to be reſolved into the divine appointment. So again, that we ſhould gratefully remember our benefactors, and that perſon therefore above all, who hath proved himſelf the greateſt friend to mankind they ever had, is what Reaſon, and all the principles of ingenuity, will not ſuffer us to be ignorant of; but *for ſetting apart bread and wine* to this uſe by *ſolemn prayer*, and then *eating and drinking in memory of our bleſſed Lord*, we have no other warrant but his expreſs command, *Do this in remembrance of me*. However, there is this to be ſaid for theſe *two* rites or ceremonies, that they have nothing burdenſome and difficult in the practice of them, and will bear an eaſy and obvious application, as ſigns to the things ſignified and intended by them; which, no doubt, is one reaſon of their having been choſen by our Saviour for this purpoſe: I ſay one reaſon, not the only one; ſince, beſides this, another inducement ſeems to have been, that he might not depart, further than was neceſſary, from the received cuſtoms of the *Jews*; among whom, as frequent waſhings were a great part of their Reli-

Religion, ſo *John* his Forerunner *came baptizing with water*, in token of that repentance by which they were prepared for the *kingdom of heaven*, or the goſpel diſpenſation, which was then at hand: and, in eating the *Paſſover*, it was their manner, having taken bread, to bleſs and break it; and to hallow or bleſs ſeveral cups of wine, one of which particularly was called the [a] *cup of bleſſing*, which is the very name that is given by St. *Paul* to the cup in the *Lord's-Supper*. But then our Saviour adopting theſe rites into the worſhip of the Chriſtian Church, affixes another meaning and uſe to them, and preſcribes a different form of words in the adminiſtration. In a word, man being a creature very much influenced by his ſenſes, and ſo too apt to forget things ſpiritual and unſeen, it ſeemed good to the divine wiſdom ſo far to conſult his weakneſs in this reſpect, as to adorn our holy Religion with theſe *two emblematical repreſentations*, which being but *two*, and admirably fitted to anſwer their end, have no need of any thing further to be ſaid in their vindication.

Theſe ceremonial Inſtitutions are commonly called by the name of *Sacraments*, which tho' it be no ſcripture term, but borrowed from the language and cuſtoms of the *Romans*, is yet retained, and grown into univerſal uſe; becauſe, as it originally ſignified

[a] 1 Cor. x. 16.

fied the oath which ſoldiers took to be faithful to their General, it is properly enough transferred to denote the affectionate zeal, and inviolable fidelity which the followers of *Jeſus*, in *Baptiſm* and the *Lord's-Supper*, profeſs and promiſe to the Captain of their ſalvation.

SECT. I.

THESE Sacraments are,

1. A plain indication of man's being in a ſtate of apoſtacy, and diſtance from God. The apparent meaning of theſe Sacraments ſhews it. For what is *Baptiſm? Not the putting away the filth of the fleſh*, but our becoming clean and pure in the ſight of God. Chriſt is therefore ſaid [a] *to have loved the Church, and to have given himſelf for it; that he might ſanctify and cleanſe it, with the waſhing of Water, by the Word; that he might preſent it to himſelf a glorious Church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing, but that it ſhould be holy and without blemiſh.* The ſanctification, or cleanſing, is by the Word, or doctrine of the Goſpel, accompanied with the operation of the *Divine Spirit*; and only *with the waſhing of Water*, or *Baptiſm*, as the ſign of this moral and inward

[a] Eph. v. 25,—27.

ward cleanſing. And who are they that have need of cleanſing, but ſuch as are defiled? Which ſhews, that till we are ſanctified by the *Word* of God, (which ſanctification is ſet forth by outward *Baptiſm*) we cannot pleaſe God. Again, what is the *Lord's-Supper*, as to one principal part of its intention, but a commemoration of the *Atoning Sacrifice* made by Chriſt's death on the behalf of mankind? And who but ſinful rebellious creatures could need a ſacrifice of reconciliation to be offered for them? So far then, theſe Ordinances have no very comfortable meaning. But,

2. They are a welcome evidence, and no leſs plain, of man's being in a recoverable ſtate. That tho' the condition of this ſinful race of creatures be without the grace and mercy of God, exceeding deplorable, yet, through this grace, it is not hopeleſs, but much otherwiſe; the Ordinances of *Biptiſm* and the *Lord's-Supper* being on purpoſe inſtituted, in concurrence with the other means of grace, to bring us into, and build us up in a ſtate of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt: they are *ſeals of the covenant of grace*, which, out of the infinite mercifulneſs of his nature, and to ſhew his well-pleaſedneſs with the righteouſneſs and obedience of his moſt beloved Son, the great Mediator, God hath graciouſly entered into with ſinful men. And here let it be matter of joy to us, and thankſgiving to our merciful God, that when,

when, through the ſin of the firſt man *Adam*, and the weakneſs and diſorders of human nature thereby occaſioned, there was no more room for a *covenant of innocence*, the ſecond man, who is *the Lord from heaven, brought in a new and better covenant*; better, whether we conſider the terms of it, ſo admirably ſuited to our fallen ſtate, or the grace and the glory promiſed: for this invaluable covenant we are indebted, under God, to the mediation of our compaſſionate Redeemer *Jeſus Chriſt*. His death procured reconciliation with God; and the Supper he bequeathed us is a ſtanding memorial of his death. And from hence it is I ſhall take my direction, in explaining this Sacrament.

The main and direct intention of the *Lord's-Supper* is to be a perpetual commemoration, or remembrance, of the death of Chriſt. This appears from thoſe words of the Apoſtle *Paul*, [b] *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come.* So that we have no ſurer or eaſier method of ſettling a right and diſtinct notion of this Ordinance, than to conſider the death of Chriſt, here preſented before our eyes, under thoſe ſeveral views in which it is capable of being contemplated by us. The following are ſome of the principal.

[b] 1 Cor. xi. 26.

SECT.

SECT. II.

1. WE may conſider the death of Chriſt, as manifeſting the thoughts which they had of him, who put him to death, and the end deſigned by them in it.——The *Jews* and *Romans*, by acting this ſcene of cruelty on the innocent *Jeſus*, proclaimed to all the world, that they eſteemed him [a] *a deceiver of the people*; for *had they known* him, *they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*; and by expoſing him as a publick ſpectacle of infamy, pain and ſorrow, their hope was, they ſhould have made all men aſhamed or afraid to own him. Whereas (to ſee how little the devices of vain men avail againſt God's eternal counſel) his being *lifted up* was the very way in which he was [b] *to draw all men unto him.* And the Sacrament of the Supper was appointed with this deſign, *That ſhewing forth the death of Chriſt therein, we might declare to the whole world our belief of him to be, that he was a teacher ſent from God, his Holy Child Jeſus, whom he hath anointed*; notwithſtanding [c] *that Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and People of Iſrael, were gathered together againſt him*; *and that we are not by fear or ſhame reſtrained from profeſſing ourſelves his diſciples.* The firſt notion then that offers itſelf to us of this

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 8. [b] John xii. 32. [c] Acts iv. 27.

this Sacrament, is its being a badge or mark of our chriſtian profeſſion. We glory in that very perſon whom the *Jews* crucified, at the ſame time profeſſing to receive him as our Lord and Maſter. Nay more, we profeſs to glory in him, even as crucified.

1. We glory in that very perſon whom the *Jews* crucified, at the ſame time profeſſing to receive him as our Lord and Maſter. We are ready to cry out with the [d] *Centurion*, and thoſe that were with him, when they ſaw the prodigies that attended his crucifixion, *Truly this is the Son of God.* He is not ſo concealed under the veil of our fleſh, or disfigured by his ſufferings, but I can eaſily perceive the divine glory ſhining through, and acknowledge him for the greateſt perſon that ever lived upon earth, *the Lord of glory*, and *my Lord.* This title he accepted, when given him by his diſciples, [e] *Ye call me Maſter and Lord, and ye ſay well, for ſo I am*; but then we likewiſe hear him in another place ſaying, [f] *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I command you?* So that it is not the *title* by which I can hope to pleaſe my Saviour, without the *ſubjection* and *obedience* that is implied in it. I muſt not only ſay well, but do well. I am to remember that all the precepts of the Goſpel, are the precepts of *Chriſt*, my Lord and Maſter; and that conſequently, if

[d] Mat. xxvii. 54. [e] John xiii. 13. [f] Luke vi. 46.

if I obey not the Goſpel, I am in works guilty of *denying the Lord that bought me*, and act a part too much like that of the [g] ſoldiers, who having *platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand, bowed the knee to him* in mockery, *and hailed him King*. Would I not have all that know me take notice, that I own myſelf the diſciple of the crucified Jeſus? But how? Not, it is to be hoped, by this ſingle action only of *eating* and *drinking* in obedience to his command, and in honour of his memory. Alas, this alone will ſignify very little, but by all the actions of my life. My whole behaviour ſhould beſpeak me a chriſtian, a ſervant and a follower of *Jeſus*. And if I really think him that excellent and divine perſon I profeſs to believe him, this one conſideration ſhould be enough, not barely to reconcile me to my duty, but to make me in love with it; ſince I profeſs to believe him a perſon of the higheſt dignity, that he came down from heaven in order to teach us the moſt excellent way, and that the ſcope and deſign of all he taught and commanded, is to make us holy as he is holy, that we may be fitted to live with him and his holy angels in the preſence of God for ever.

2. We not only profeſs ourſelves the diſciples of one that was crucified, but alſo to glory

[g] Mat. xxvii. 29.

glory in him as crucified. We think this no reproach to our bleſſed Lord that he was treated in ſo ignominious a manner by a blind and ungrateful world; or to our Religion, that the Author of it was ſlain and hanged on a tree; or to ourſelves, that we are the followers of one whom the main body of the *Jews* rejected; but on the contrary, a very great honour to us, to our Religion, and to our divine Maſter. We are not aſhamed to ſay, Lo, this is he, the Lord our Redeemer, we have waited for him, and he will ſave us! Let the prejudiced Jews expreſs their abhorrence of him, and, with a mixture of ſcorn and hatred, call him *the man that was hanged* *; let them ſay, that it cannot ſo much as enter into their thoughts that the *Meſſiah* ſhould be crucified, and puniſhed with a death which the law pronounces accurſed; I joyfully take the opportunity which the commemoration of his death, in the way that he himſelf hath commanded, gives me, to avow my faith and truſt in him, glorying in nothing more than [h] *in Chriſt crucified, to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.* Had he, whom we Chriſtians call and account the *Meſſiah*, been cut off for himſelf, had he de-

* As Trypho the Jew does in Juſtin Martyr.

[h] 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

ſerved the death which he ſuffered, his name would never have ſpread, as it hath done to the ends of the earth, and his cauſe have ſubſiſted to this day; as, we make no doubt, it will to the period of all time.

Pilate himſelf could obſerve that it was only [1] *for envy that the chief prieſts and elders had delivered Jeſus to him.* And the envy they betrayed on this occaſion was at once their great ſin, and a ſort of homage and acknowledgement paid by them to our Saviour's ſuperior virtues, which offended them for much the ſame reaſon as the light of the ſun does ſore eyes. "Yes, O my "Jeſus, it was only becauſe the world was "not worthy of thee, that thou meteſt "with no better uſage from the world; the "world would have loved its own, but be-"cauſe thou and thy kingdom were not of "this world, therefore the world hated thee, "as thou both in thy life and death did "ſhew thy contempt of the world! And "ſhall I eſteem and admire thee ever the "leſs for this? No, but the more. When "I conſider the noble fruits that ſpring from "that curſed tree on which the Son of God "expired, and that under the banner of "the croſs all nations have been brought to "the obedience of the faith, I think with "myſelf, what can be more glorious either for "our Maſter, for us his diſciples, or for the "Goſ-

[1] Mat. xxvii. 18.

" Gospel which we have received from him, " than that by such unlikely means he hath " triumphed over all the powers of earth " and hell, and made it a more honourable " thing for his followers to despise worldly " pomp and riches than to enjoy them, es- " teeming them as mere trifles in comparison " of the true riches, and the invisible glo- " ries of the heavenly world! Am I one of " those that *glory in the cross of Christ?* O " let me take care that I be not found in " that number whom the [k] Apostle *Paul* " pronounces enemies to our Saviour's " cross!"

Every one is an enemy to the cross of Christ, that is not an enemy to those sins and vices, from which Christ died to redeem us; he shews himself an enemy in opposing the use that ought to be made of the doctrine of the cross, and, as much as in him lies, the progress of that doctrine. Did all the followers of Jesus behave no better than some of them do, how soon would the honours of the cross cease, and the Religion of him that was crucified be blotted out from the earth? And had all that named the name of Christ in the beginning approved themselves no better friends to him, Christianity, humanly speaking, had been stifled in its birth; and the whole world, judging of the Master by the disciples, would have concluded that he

[k] Phil. iii. 18.

did not ſuffer unjuſtly. With the greateſt reaſon therefore does the Apoſtle ſay of thoſe who trample on the rules of Chriſtianity, that they are *enemies to the croſs of Chriſt*; they are the perſons that moſt of all hinder the triumphs of the croſs, and, of all men, they have leaſt cauſe to make their boaſt in it.

Let me, before I cloſe this head, addreſs myſelf to ſuch as turn their backs on the *Lord's Table*, and beſeech them ſeriouſly to aſk themſelves a few plain queſtions. How can I number myſelf among the followers of Chriſt, and yet will not be perſuaded to join with them in an action, whereby the chriſtian ſociety is diſtinguiſhed from all others? Muſt not my Chriſtianity, as to the external part of it, be imperfect, if I am contented to want one principal ſign of a Chriſtian? Or what ſhould I be able to ſay for myſelf, ſhould Chriſt not own me for his, upon my appearing before him without this mark of a diſciple, a ſincere love to all the Inſtitutions of my bleſſed Maſter? Certainly, if it ſhould be found that my neglecting the *Lord's-Supper*, proceeded from a want of real love and reſpect to my Saviour and his commands, nothing will be ſufficient to excuſe it. *Baptiſm* puts my name on the roll of his followers; but my baptiſmal dedication, if in infancy, being not properly my own act, it is in a manner neceſſary that

that I ſhould make it mine, by recognizing it now that I am grown up to years of underſtanding: and how is the obligation of one Sacrament to be acknowledged and renewed any way ſo well as by putting myſelf under the bond of the other? Beſides, that *Baptiſm* hath not ſo immediate and viſible a regard to *Chriſt crucified*, as the *Lord's-Supper*, on which therefore we ſhould ſet the higheſt value, to let the world ſee that we think not this article of our faith any ſhame to us, or diſcredit to our Religion, but a very great honour and advantage to both.

SECT. III.

11. WE may conſider the death of Chriſt as that of a martyr, or witneſs, a martyr to the truth of his own doctrine, the firſt, and the nobleſt.——His death was entirely voluntary; [a] *no man*, ſaith he, *taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myſelf:* as they could not have taken it from him without his conſent, ſo without his conſent (could we ſuppoſe this) whatever he had ſuffered, though the conſequence of what he taught, would not have procured him the name of a martyr; for he is not a martyr, who having brought himſelf into the ſnare by ſome doc-

[a] John x. 18.

trine which he hath advanced and propagated, would be glad to get out of it again upon any terms, even though it were the abjuring as falſe all that he had taught for true; but he that dares ſay the ſame, in the face of the moſt threatening dangers, that he had ſaid before, and chooſes rather to die for the truth, than to deny and forſake it, this all will allow to be a real martyr; and ſuch a martyr was *Jeſus Chriſt*. When upon his trial the [b] *High Prieſt adjured him by the living God to tell him, whether he was the Chriſt the Son of God*, though ſilent before to all that the falſe witneſſes had alledged againſt him, and not to be provoked to plead in his own defence, which he could eaſily have done in ſuch a manner, as to make thoſe, who had the bittereſt hatred to the truth, yield to the force of it, he immediately anſwers, *thou haſt ſaid*; or, I am that very perſon. *Pilate* the heathen governour, and his judge, aſks him a like queſtion, *Art thou a King then?* To which he replies, *thou ſayeſt that I am a King*; or what thou haſt now ſaid, being taken out of the form of a queſtion *, is very true, thy words are βασιλευς ει συ, *thou art a King*, and I am free to ſay that I am ſo; [c] *to this end was I born, and for this cauſe came I into the world, that I ſhould bear witneſs to the truth.*

[b] Mat. xxvi. 63. [c] John xviii. 37.

* His anſwer to the Queſtion of the High Prieſt may be accounted for in the ſame manner.

truth. This is that good confeſſion which St. *Paul* ſaith he witneſſed before *Pontius Pilate*, recommending it to his ſon [d] *Timothy* for his imitation. Here are two known characters of the *Meſſiah*; for in the queſtion of the *High Prieſt*, *Art thou the Chriſt, the Son of God? Chriſt* (or *Meſſiah*) and *Son of God*, ſeem to be uſed as equivalent expreſſions, which we may ſuppoſe to be the reaſon that in St. *Luke*'s relation of the ſame thing, it is only, [e] *Art thou the Chriſt?* And that the *Meſſiah* was to be a King, the *Jews* to this day agree with us, as widely as we differ in explaining the nature of his kingdom. Our Saviour, for wiſe reaſons, had not openly and directly aſſumed the name and titles of the *Meſſiah* till now; but now that he was ſummoned by the magiſtrate to give witneſs to the truth, and no ill uſe could be made by the people of his owning himſelf to be a King, (when his death would convince them that his kingdom was not from hence, of a worldly and temporal kind, as he then told them) he no longer ſeeks concealment, but owns himſelf to be *Meſſiah the King*, *and the Son of God*, though he was not ignorant that his ſo doing could have no other effect than to haſten his condemnation.

This our Saviour's conſtancy to the death which he bore with ſo much meekneſs to-

[d] 1 Tim. vi. 13. [e] Luke xxii. 67.

wards his enemies, and confidence in God, neither of which, perhaps, was ever known in a deceiver, in that dreadful hour, though they might be in one deceived; this, I ſay, added to the miracles he had wrought, and the exemplary holineſs and goodneſs of his life, ſhould make us think, when we are meditating on his death in this view of it, of the mighty confirmation which our faith, in the divinity of our Religion, derives from hence. Would an impoſtor, if it was poſſible for ſuch a one to put on the appearance of the moſt unaffected ſanctity, and of all other virtues, have been able to maintain it to the very laſt, and in defence of a known falſhood? It cannot be. And therefore when we ſee Jeſus Chriſt exemplifying his divine doctrine in his life, (of which more preſently) and ſealing it with his blood, we may very well conclude, that for certain [f] *all things that John ſpeak of this man*, or this man of himſelf, or his Apoſtles concerning him, *are true.*

But the uſe we are more immediately concerned to make of this view of our Saviour's death, as of a martyr, is to reflect on the reaſonableneſs of his demands, that we ſhould ſacrifice every thing for the truth's ſake, not excepting life itſelf, which we muſt [g] hate, acting after much the ſame manner as if we did ſo, or we cannot be his diſciples.

[f] John x. 41. [g] Luke xiv. 26.

ples. In all this he requires no more of us than he practiſed himſelf; which ſhould put us in mind of the diſpoſition with which we ſhould celebrate the memory of this glorious martyr, and bring us to reſolve with an humble reliance on heavenly aid, *though I die for thee, yet will I not deny thee; though all men ſhould be offended in thee, yet will I not be offended.* That God, who knoweth the hearts of all men, knows, without putting it to the trial, whether we ſhould adhere thus firmly to the cauſe of truth; and where he ſees a preparation of mind and heart, will reward it, though not perhaps with the ſame crown as that of actual martyrs, yet with a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

SECT. IV.

111. WE may conſider the death of Chriſt as that of our example.—Generally they that are put to death, by the publick magiſtrate, are ſet forth as examples in another ſenſe, *viz.* to warn and deter others from doing like them; but here is one, who, though treated under a form of juſtice as the worſt of malefactors, is yet propoſed to us as an example of all virtue and goodneſs; of virtue calumniated, oppreſſed

preſſed and perſecuted, yet ſtill the ſame. So we are told, that [a] *Chriſt ſuffered for us, leaving us an example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps.* In our bleſſed Lord we have an example of the greateſt diſintereſtedneſs, the moſt ardent zeal and concern for the good of mankind, the moſt wonderful humility and condeſcenſion that ever was, and a reſignation and obedience to God without bounds; all which we are called upon to imitate in thoſe words of the Apoſtle *Paul* to the *Philippians*, [b] *Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himſelf of no reputation, and took on him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men; and being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs.* Could humiliation, ſubmiſſion and obedience be carried further than this? [c] *Not my will, but thine be done.* [d] *I come to do thy will*; to do it by yielding myſelf to ſuffer it. This was the language of the bleſſed Jeſus; and as he ſpoke ſo he acted.

The command to love our enemies, to forgive them that injure us, and to pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us, hath been reckoned a *hard ſaying*, an ob-

[a] 1 Pet. ii. 21. [b] Phil. ii. 5,——8.
[c] Luke xxii. 42. [d] Heb. x. 7.

objection againſt Chriſtianity never to be anſwered. But by whom is this eſteemed ſo unreaſonable? One would think only by ſuch as have not read, or do not believe, or at beſt do not conſider, the hiſtory of our Saviour's Paſſion. Other anſwers might be returned, but, waving them, let us leave his example, particularly when he was on the croſs, to ſilence this objection againſt his precepts——[e] *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*——The beſt excuſe that could poſſibly be made in their favour, and accompanied with a prayer, which, from ſuch a perſon, and in ſuch circumſtances, did not, and could not, fail of ſucceſs. What filial truſt did he exerciſe in God, at a time when the whole world was turned againſt him, and God himſelf had withdrawn the uſual manifeſtations of his preſence! [f] *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* He ſtill calls him his God, not quitting his hold of him; and breathes out his holy ſoul into the boſom of his love, [g] *Father, into thy hands I commend my ſpirit.* So ſhould we learn to maintain an humble hope in God, when the ſcene of Providence looks moſt dark and melancholy; and be ſo far from judging of our intereſt in the divine favour by outward events, as not to conclude any thing againſt ourſelves, merely from the want of thoſe ſenſible refreſhments and exultations of ſpirit, which

[e] Luke xxiii. 34. [f] Mat. xxvii. 46. [g] Luke xxiii. 46.

which we may have ſometimes experienced. What good people call *ſpiritual deſertion*, is many times nothing more than a depreſſion and ſadneſs of mind; an interruption, not in the life and activity of their graces, but in the comforts afforded by them; ſomewhat of the ſame kind with that eclipſe which our Saviour ſuffered in his laſt hours, but vaſtly ſhort of it in degree.

We ſhould moreover regard Chriſt's dying behaviour, as finiſhing the example of his life. Were we only to judge of him by his death, we might from thence form a pretty certain conjecture of what his life had been; as from the manner of his life, nothing elſe could be expected but ſuch a death; a death by which he glorified God, and inſtructed and edified mankind. We ſee one and the ſame inward principle of love to that which is good, exerting itſelf with a moſt vigorous influence, and perfect uniformity in all he did, and all he ſuffered: he had long before invited the world to learn of him meekneſs and lowlineſs of mind, and all the difference in this reſpect between the cloſe of his life and the reſt of it was, that his ſufferings being then more grievous, he had an opportunity to ſhew theſe virtues in a fairer light than they had ever appeared in before. He had always gone up and down doing good, and as his life, ſo his death was directed to the bene-

benefit of mankind; the ſpirit of piety and devotion that animated him was remarkable; his ſoul was always on the wing, and what time he could borrow from the offices of friendſhip and kindneſs, and inſtruction towards men, he ſpent in prayer to God; and the ſupport he had from hence, and the great advantage it was of to him, in the laſt and darkeſt ſcene of his life, is as eaſily conceivable; [h] *Father, the hour is come —— I have glorified thee on earth, I have finiſhed the work which thou haſt given me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thy ownſelf, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was!* The holy life which he had led, and the glory that was to follow, brightened the gloomy path which his ſoul then trod. How he ſtood affected to the world and all its injoyments, he had ſhewn all along before; [i] *being rich, for our ſakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich*; and not think the happineſs of life to conſiſt in the abundance of the things which a man poſſeſſes, or that this world is the proper abode of felicity: and he ended a poor and mean, but not inglorious life, with a painful and ſhameful death, that we by him may be taught how to get above the love of the one, and the fear of the other. He pleaſed not himſelf, was not guilty of ſenſual indulgencies, did

[h] John xvii. 1, 4, 5. [i] 2 Cor. viii. 2.

did not form his conduct upon fancy, or cuſtom, or paſſion, preferred heaven, from whence he came, to earth, whither he deſcended only on a viſit of compaſſion; behaved gravely, uſefully, and holy, and, like the ſetting ſun, appeared greateſt at the end of his courſe.

" O Jeſus, I now ſee what I have to do " when I ſhew forth thy death in thy Sup- " per! I am to contemplate the heavenly " virtues and graces that then ſhone forth " in thee, after having been exhibited in " the whole courſe of thy life, and to ex- " cite and oblige myſelf to imitate them. " I am determined to follow thee, tho' it " be at a long diſtance between, and ſhall " make it my ambition to reſemble thee in " every part of my behaviour, whether to- " wards God, towards men, or with re- " gard to myſelf. Was it uſual in the pri- " mitive church, when they commemora- " ted the deaths of the martyrs, to recite " their laudable actions, and worthy qua- " lities? I will be thankful for their ex- " amples, and thoſe of all other good men, " and be followers of them as far forth as " they were ſo of my Saviour, but no fur- " ther. Thy example, O moſt holy Jeſus, " is that which I intend to have continually " before me; and while I behold thy body " hanging on the croſs, I will endeavour " to copy and deſcribe the amiable virtues

" of

" of thy ſoul upon my own! My aim ſhall " be to be [k] crucified to the world by thy " croſs, and to have the world crucified " to me; to be zealouſly affected in that " which is good, and meekly patient under " affliction and trouble; to be actuated by " the ſame ſpirit, and to live and die like " thee."

SECT. V.

IV. THE death of Chriſt may be conſidered as a demonſtration of the moſt aſtoniſhing love that ever was, both of the Father and of the Son; of the Father in giving his Son to die for us, and of the Son of God who ſo freely offered himſelf.—[a] *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*—And whereas it is the obſervation of our Lord, that [b] *greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend,* God hath herein [c] *commended his love to us, that while we were yet ſinners Chriſt died for us,* that we who had been *enemies might be reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* We ſee the greatneſs of this love in the greatneſs or dignity of the per-

[k] Gal. vi. 14. [a] John iii. 16. [b] John xv. 12. [c] Rom. v. 8,—10.

perſon ſuffering, and his nearneſs to God, being his [d] *only begotten Son, who lay in the boſom of the Father*; in the greatneſs of the ſufferings voluntarily ſubmitted to by him, he ſuffered death, even the ſhameful and painful death of the croſs; in the great unworthineſs of the perſons to whom this extraordinary favour was ſhewn, ſinners, and enemies to God by ſin; and, finally, in the ſurpaſſing greatneſs of the benefits thence reſulting, all of them iſſuing into, and as it were ſummed up in, that now mentioned, eternal life. Chriſt's willingneſs to die for the advantage we ſhould receive from his dying teſtimony to the truth of his Religion, and his moſt inſtructive and affecting example, muſt be thankfully owned as a proof of his love; but the greateſt proofs of that love are yet behind.

To perpetuate the memory of his dying love, our bleſſed Saviour inſtituted his Supper, to be obſerved till his ſecond coming, commanding his diſciples to do it in remembrance of him.—For which reaſon it may ſeem unaccountable, that there ſhould be any ſo miſtaken, as to deny this Sacrament, or ſo ungrateful, as to allow themſelves, without any manner of uneaſineſs, in the neglect of it, which I fear is done by a great many who own the Inſtitution. The Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians religiouſly kept this Ordinance, and much

[d] John i. 18.

much oftner than we do now, though they had the death of Chriſt freſh in their memories, and ſo could not be ſuppoſed to need a ſenſible repreſentation of it, and of his love manifeſted therein, ſo much as we, who live at ſo remote a diſtance from the time and place of our Saviour's death. Did not Chriſt die for us as well as for them? And, if ſo, are we not equally obliged to celebrate his love in dying for us? Was not this Supper inſtituted for our ſake as much as for theirs? And, in one reſpect, more, as we are now in greater danger of forgetting our benefactor, becauſe it is now longer ſince that he lived upon earth, and died to procure the benefits of redemption for us? And ought we not thankfully to obſerve an Inſtitution which doth ſo mightily aſſiſt our faith and gratitude; an Inſtitution which the Primitive Chriſtians obſerved as much oftener than we, as upon the account now mentioned, they needed it leſs? Such a friend and lover of ſouls as Chriſt hath ſhewn himſelf, deſerves never to be forgotten; and, doubtleſs, never will as long as there is a church upon earth, purchaſed with his blood, founded by his preaching, and preſerved by his Providence. But then we have reaſon to believe, that it is by this Ordinance, which, like a pillar, bears his name inſcribed upon it, that a lively memory of him is kept up in the church.

The unparalleled love of Jeſus ſhould be our daily meditation; but we muſt not think that this excludes the advantage, and even neceſſity of an Ordinance, in which it is remembered after a more open and ſolemn manner. The worſhip of God is to be performed every day, in the cloſet, and in the family, notwithſtanding which God ſaw it requiſite to ſet apart one day in ſeven for the more auguſt and publick performance of his worſhip; and that there is any ſuch thing as true Religion in the world we may reckon, in great meaſure, owing to the obſervation of the *Lord's-Day*; as it is to be attributed to the *Lord's-Supper* that the memory of Chriſt's love ſpreads and flouriſhes in his church. And I am ready to think that they who cannot be prevailed on to commemorate the love of Chriſt at his Table, are not the perſons who ſtand in leaſt need of this aſſiſtance. This then is another notion which we are to form of the *Lord's-Supper*, it is the means appointed to eternize the memory of Chriſt's dying love, and of the love of God declared by the ſame event. And, oh, let not the remembrance of his death ever die! But let our love, inflamed and ſtrengthened by this holy Ordinance, keep alive the memory of his. We merit to be eternally forgotten of God, if we can forget our Redeemer.

But

But why is Chriſt ſo deſirous that his love ſhould be had in everlaſting remembrance? Is it only that it may be the ſubject of a barren admiration? Or merely for the ſake of our praiſes, and that he may have a name upon earth? Alas, theſe are low ends for the Son of God to propoſe, who being the wonder of angels, and the delightful theme of their ſongs, needs not, ſurely, covet the applauſes of ſuch poor, ignorant and ſinful mortals as we are! No, we muſt carry our thoughts further. The *love of God*, and *our neighbour*, are the *two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets*; and both theſe have a new life and ſtrength derived into them from the love of God, and of Jeſus repreſented in the Sacrament of the Supper. [e] *Here is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us*; but then, for this very reaſon we are to love him the more, that he [f] *firſt loved us.* Next to God, who is love, we are to love his Son, who hath loved us, and given himſelf for us; and becauſe God hath ſo loved us, [g] *we ought alſo to love one another*; for this is *the commandment of God, that he who loveth God, love his brother alſo*; and the ſame is Chriſt's *new commandment* to his diſciples. We have all a better title to one another's love, than any of us can pretend to have had to the love of God; and ſhall prove ourſelves doubly

[e] John iv. 19. [f] 1 John iv. 10. [g] John xiii. 34.

unwothy of this love, if we refuſe to make ſo eaſy and ſo reaſonable a return for it, as this of brotherly affection. It is an additional motive to univerſal love, that we are all comprehended and embraced in the arms of divine love. And how is our love to diſcover itſelf? Why, if occaſion be, [h] *in laying down our lives for the brethren.* And ſurely then much more in a readineſs to bear their burthens, to relieve their neceſſities, and to diſcharge all the other offices of kindneſs and good-will to them, ſince no one, who is in a diſpoſition of mind to give the greateſt inſtance of love, can be backward to do that which is much leſs.

" Thy love, O my Saviour, conſtraineth " me to all this, becauſe I thus judge, " that thou diedſt for me, that I ſhould not " live to myſelf, but to thee! And what " am I to underſtand by living to thee, " but doing thoſe thing which will be moſt " acceptable to thee, and moſt ſerviceable " to the cauſe of Religion, that is, the cauſe " of Jeſus in the world? What but my " being juſt, and charitable, and holy; and, " in a word, behaving ſo, that the world " may receive ſome of thoſe advantages, and " in a leſſer degree, from me and others of " the ſame ſpirit with me, as they would " in greater number, and much higher de- " gree reap from thy preſence and company, " if

[h] 1 John iii. 16.

" if thou thyſelf was upon earth; and ſo thy " Spirit breathing and acting in us, and ſhed- " ding its benign influences upon all around " us, may in ſome meaſure ſupply thy per- " ſonal abſence?"

SECT. VI.

v. THE death of Chriſt may be conſidered as that of a ſacrifice, by which the diſpleaſure of God was atoned, and the ſin of man expiated.—We may here ſay, as our Lord's forerunner, when he pointed him out to the *Jews*, [a] *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world!* [b] *Once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.* [c] *He bore our ſins in his own body on the tree.* Now Chriſt's death having thus the nature of a publick ſacrifice, we may regard the Supper he was pleaſed to inſtitute, as a commemorative repreſentation of this ſacrifice, and as a feaſt upon it.

1. The *Lord's-Supper* is a commemorative repreſentation of the ſacrifice which our Redeemer made of himſelf on the croſs.—This is the language of the Inſtitution itſelf; from that we learn, that *the bread we eat, is* (repreſentatively) *the body of Chriſt that was given*

[a] John i. 29. [b] Heb. ix. 26. [c] 1 Pet. ii. 24.

for us; and *the cup we drink of is* (in the ſame ſenſe) [d] *the blood of Chriſt which was ſhed for us.* The death of Chriſt was a true *propitiatory ſacrifice*, and, as ſuch, is commemorated in the Sacrament of the Supper. But the *Lord's-Supper* is not, and indeed cannot be, itſelf ſuch a ſacrifice as the *Papiſts* affirm, becauſe it is a commemorative ſign of it; and common ſenſe will teach us, that the ſign, and the thing ſignified by it, cannot be the ſame. However, as was juſt now obſerved, it is a repreſentation of that ſacrifice; very faint indeed, but not inſignificant; and every time the believer takes the conſecrated elements, he doth, as it were, lay his hands upon the ſacrifice repreſented by them, and plead with God in virtue of it for pardon and acceptance; hereby uniting his prayers, and all that he does in the ſervice of God, to the interceſſion of the great High Prieſt, who paſſed into the heavens.

The *third* and the *ninth* hours among the *Jews* (their *three* anſwering to our *nine o' clock* in the morning, and their *nine* to our *three* in the afternoon) were called *hours of Prayers*, becauſe theſe were the times of the daily ſacrifice, and the burning of incenſe, when the people choſe to offer their prayers, that they might accompany the ſacrifices in the temple, and become more acceptable in conjunction with them. Thus in all our ap-

[d] Luke xxii. 19, 20.

approaches to the throne of divine grace, whether in publick or private, on the day of ſacred reſt, or at any other time, we ſhould be mindful of the ſacrifice of the croſs, and the interceſſion of our High Prieſt, founded upon it, in the holy of holies above; and *having an altar whereof they had no right to eat, who ſerved the tabernacle*, ſhould *by him*, who was our ſacrifice, and is ſtill our High Prieſt, [e] *offer the ſacrifice of praiſe to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* But though the ſacrifice of Chriſt be a main ground of our hope, and what, being ſinful creatures, we are concerned chiefly to have reſpect to in all our religious performances, yet when we behold this ſacrifice repreſented in the actions performed at the *Lord's-Table*, we ſeem to have a kind of ſignal given us to apply by faith to this ſacrifice, and a more than ordinary advantage and opportunity for the exerciſe of our faith in it.

Hiſtory gives us an account of an *Egyptian Nobleman*, who, out of his great affection to the memory of his ſon, had an image of him placed in the houſe, to which the ſervants, having committed a fault, would flee for protection, finding it their beſt refuge from the anger of their lord. Here we, who have grievouſly offended God, take refuge by faith in Chriſt himſelf, his once-dead, but now ever-living Son; in the lively exerciſes

[e] Heb. xiii. 10,——15.

of which faith, we are very much aſſiſted by the repreſentation of our Saviour's ſufferings, exhibited to us in his Supper. " I have " ſinned, and bluſh to lift up my face to " thee, my God; but ſee here what thy " beloved Son hath ſuffered for my ſins! Let " thy juſtice behold this ſacrifice, and, after " that ſight hath diſarmed it, let it then " ſtrike!"

There are two things, more eſpecially, which we are taught by the repreſentation of Chriſt's ſacrifice in the Sacramental Supper, *viz.* the great evil of ſin, and God's readineſs to pardon it, which we are to conſider as an argument of his great goodneſs. We ſee the evil of ſin in the ſufferings of other men, and feel it in our own; but not all the infelicities of human life, nor death reigning from *Adam* to the laſt generation of men that ſhall be upon earth, can afford that convincing, that affecting evidence of the evil of ſin, as the ſufferings and death of the Son of God. " Muſt he, that excellent " perſon, ſtiled *the Son of God*, to denote " his dignity, and *the Lamb of God*, to ſig- " nify his innocence, die to expiate the guilt " of ſin? And how great then muſt that " guilt be which needed ſuch an expiation! " And why am I, from the dolorous paſſion of " my Saviour, to take occaſion to reflect on " the evil of ſin, but that I may be excited " to hate it more than ever, and to reſolve

" and

" and watch againſt it? This, I am ſenſi-
" ble, is the end deſigned; and I do now
" therefore renounce all league and friend-
" ſhip with ſin, and, both out of hatred
" to that, and love to my Saviour, intend to
" purſue it to its utter and final deſtruction.
" And great is the encouragement I have to
" do ſo, ſince in the Ordinance before me,
" I have a ſort of ocular demonſtration, that
" God is ready to forgive all ſin; which ſhews
" that he is as good, as ſin is evil.

" Chriſt died as a ſacrifice; and if this ſacri-
" fice was not accepted, wherefore is this per-
" petual memorial of it? If inſufficient, why
" is there not a repetition of the ſacrifice it-
" ſelf, but only of the repreſentation of it?
" Without controverſy, God is in Chriſt re-
" conciling the world to himſelf, and is actu-
" ally reconciled to all that repent. The hope
" of forgiveneſs is eſſential to the Religion
" of fallen creatures, and one of the firſt
" and moſt active principles of it; and where
" this hope is raiſed into aſſurance, as it is
" by the ſacrifice of Chriſt which we here
" commemorate, may it not be expected to
" be the ſpring of the moſt chearful, moſt
" conſtant, and univerſal obedience? I can
" no more think that God will reject my
" ſincere and faithful ſervice of him, tho'
" attended with many ſinful failings and
" defects, than that he will accept me, and
" be pleaſed with me, if I continue in the

" ha-

" habitual practice of any ſin. His pardon-
" ing and receiving thoſe that forſake their
" ſins, puniſhing the more ſeverely ſuch
" as will not be perſuaded to do it, are
" equally plain from the inſtance of God's
" love to ſinners, and hatred of ſin. The
" death of Chriſt renders ſin more pardon-
" able, but not leſs hateful, rather abundantly
" more ſo; I will therefore hope in the mercy
" of God, becauſe Chriſt died; but, for that
" very reaſon, that he died, I will not pre-
" ſume upon it, for if ſo much was done
" to the *green tree* (to him that was righteous
" and innocent, and ſo like green wood not
" fit fuel for the fire) [f] *what ſhall be done to*
" *the dry*; to thoſe who, by impenitency in
" a ſinful courſe, render themſelves *veſſels*
" *of wrath fitted for deſtruction*, as much
" fitted for it as dry wood is to burn?"

2. The *Lord's-Supper* is a feaſt upon a ſacrifice. It is called a feaſt, in alluſion to the Jewiſh Paſſover, for [g] *Chriſt our Paſſover is ſacrificed for us*; and as the *Jews* feaſted upon their paſchal lamb, after it had been firſt preſented to God, ſo do we, ſacramentally, and by faith, upon ours. This conſideration of it will ſuggeſt ſeveral things of great uſe and importance to our thoughts.

1. As a feaſt it is very expreſſive of the Communion of ſaints.—Eating and drinking together was ever counted a mark of friendſhip,

[f] Luke xxiii. 31. [g] 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

ſhip, and a likely way of eſtabliſhing the union; eſpecially if a feaſt was added to this very end; for, as one obſerves, this amounted to a mutual promiſe of the parties concerned to live in peace and unity among themſelves. [h] By how many endearing ties doth Chriſt preſerve the unity of his body the church! And yet all little enough to keep the members of it faſt knit to one another. Of all the external bands of chriſtian love, there is none of that efficacy as the holy communion; wherefore, it is recorded of the primitive diſciples, [i] *that they continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one ſoul.* If they that are of the ſame family, and eat at the ſame table, cannot agree, they muſt be of a very unhappy temper indeed. [k] *We being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.* Now if they, who joining in the ſame Sacraments, and receiving the ſame Spirit, are incorporated into one myſtical body, and united to one head, are not able to maintain a tolerable harmony among themſelves, let us never wonder that others differ. Should not their care be at all times, and by all means, [l] *to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace?*

Is

[h] Gen. xxvii. 28,—30.
[i] Acts ii. 42. iv. 32.
[k] 1 Cor. x. 17.
[l] Eph. iv. 3.

Is not this the leſſon we learn from our Lord's inſtituting his Supper; and one thing which we promiſe when we meet at his Table?

Let Chriſtians reflect on the agreement among perſons confederated in any wicked deſign, and bluſh to think that common guilt ſhould do more to hold ſuch men together, than the ſame common privileges and common hopes to prevent diſſentions among them. And, was this a proper place for it, we might further remark it, as matter of the greateſt lamentation of all, that the Sacrament of the Supper, which ſhould be *the center of union to the chriſtian world*, inſtead of always anſwering that end, hath too often been one of the chief engines to divide men into parties, and the principal means to ſharpen and halloo the zeal of one party againſt another. We need not go ſo far back, as the animoſities among ſome foreign Proteſtants in the beginning of the Reformation; I fear we have too many inſtances nearer home. Is it that this Sacrament hath of itſelf this tendency? Or becauſe men cannot be contented to let others enjoy the Ordinances of the Goſpel in that ſimplicity in which Chriſt left them to his immediate followers, nor on the ſame terms of communion as were then thought ſufficient? Be that as it may; the duty of all communicants

municants lies plain. Does a perſon [m] *love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity?* It is certain he belongs to the *Communion of Saints*, whether he be of the particular communion that I am a member of, or of ſome other; though it ſhould be of one from which I am excluded, becauſe not able to comply, without offending my conſcience with the conditions required. In this caſe, I am not preſently to ſhut him out from a ſhare in my affections, but account him as a brother, whether he will call me by that name or no; and when I think that all good Chriſtians are of the ſame family, and united to the ſame head, how diſtant ſoever in place, or perhaps in opinion, I am to ſtretch my heart as wide as poſſible I can, that I may take them in all; remembering that the ſame heaven will receive us at laſt, though the ſame place, through neceſſity, or from ſome unhappy miſtake, cannot hold us upon earth.

2. The *Lord's-Supper* being a feaſt on a ſacrifice, we have a fellowſhip therein with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt. The tabernacle, or temple, under the Law, was *the houſe of God*, the altar his *Table*, and the ſacrifices brought to be offered there were no longer the offerer's but the [n] *proviſions of God's houſe*, and are therefore called *the bread*, or food, *of God*; ſo that when the offerer was permitted to partake of his own

[m] Eph. vi. 24. [n] Levit. xxi. 6.

own ſacrifice, he was not to conſider it as his own, but as God's, and to look upon himſelf as God's gueſt. And is not every chriſtian church the Lord's houſe, though not in exactly the ſame ſenſe as the temple was ſo? Is not the Communion-Table called [o] *the Table of the Lord?* And what is provided, *the Lord's-Supper?* And the Sacramental Cup, in particular, *the Cup of the Lord?* " Think, therefore, O my ſoul, of " the honour to which thou art raiſed, that " the Lord Jeſus Chriſt is Maſter of the " feaſt, and that God himſelf vouchſafes " his preſence, and bids every worthy re- " ceiver welcome to the entertainments of " his houſe! This is ſomething more than " to be a gueſt at the table of the greateſt " perſon upon earth; for here thou art the " gueſt of God, as truly ſo, though not " entertained with the ſame magnificence, as " thoſe whom he hath advanced to dwell in " his heavenly palace."

The Apoſtle *Paul* takes notice, that they who partook of the ſacrifice offered to idols, or dæmons, had fellowſhip with thoſe dæmons, and were thereby diſqualified from having [p] fellowſhip with Chriſt, by drinking of his Cup, and partaking of his Table. It will not be amiſs if we ſometimes conſider that our forefathers, being idolatrous Gentiles, were among thoſe who were in friendſhip with

[o] 1 Cor. x. 21. xi. 20. [p] 1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

with falſe Gods, and ſtrangers to the true; while we, their deſcendants, [q] *are brought nigh by the blood of Chriſt*, much nearer than our heathen anceſtors; nay nearer than God's peculiar people themſelves under the Law; for agreeably to the ſuperior excellency of our ſacrifice, is our greater [r] freedom of acceſs to God; who having beſtowed on us the adoption of ſons, hath [s] *ſent forth the ſpirit of his ſon into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father*; not *the ſpirit of bondage* but *the ſpirit of adoption*; to encourage which filial ſpirit, and humble boldneſs towards God, the whole frame of the Goſpel Diſpenſation is viſibly fitted, and particularly the Ordinance of the Supper; we are now treated more as children, and are, emphatically ſpeaking, *a people near unto the Lord.*

Now, ſince ſuch is the nature of this Ordinance, that [t] *the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Chriſt, and the cup of bleſſing which we bleſs is the communion of the blood of Chriſt*, what manner of perſons ought chriſtian communicants to be in all purity of heart, and holineſs of converſation, who are received into this intimate converſe with the holy God, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt the image of his holineſs? [u] *What communion hath light with darkneſs? If we ſay we have fellowſhip with him, and walk in darkneſs, we lie, and do not the truth*; [x] *but if*

[q] Eph. ii. 13. [r] Gal. iv. 6. [s] Rom. viii. 15.
[t] 1 Cor. x. 16. [u] 2 Cor. vi. 14. [x] 1 John i. 5, 6.

if we walk in the light, as he is in the light; we have fellowſhip one with another; *and the blood of Jeſus Chriſt his Son cleanſeth us from all ſin.* We are, doubtleſs, at beſt unworthy of this communion with God, and not ſo well qualified for it as were to be deſired; and hereupon we might be ready to queſtion our being privileged with ſo near an approach to him, but that he hath put it out of all doubt by condeſcending to our weakneſs, and, in a manner, appealing to our very ſenſes, in order to convince us of his entire readineſs to receive us, worthleſs as we are, and unfit as we are for his ſociety, to dwell with us. He that inviteth us to his Table will not deny us his preſence and converſe there. Let us acknowledge our unpreparedneſs for communion with God, and the backwardneſs of our bad hearts to it, but let us not doubt of God's willingneſs to have communion with us, provided only that we come not in our moral uncleanneſs or pollution; for we are never to forget this, that *without holineſs* we can no more be really *nigh to God* in this world, than we can *ſee his face* in the next; and it would be very ſtrange if any ſhould be ſo exceeding fooliſh as to think of putting the blood of Chriſt itſelf, and the Sacrament of his Supper in the room of this holineſs, when both theſe do ſo clearly inſinuate the abſolute neceſſity of it.

3. The *Lord's-Supper* being a feaſt upon a ſacrifice, there ſeems to be ſufficient ground for

for our conſidering it as a ſolemn form of our renewing our covenant with God, and a means and ſign of our participating in the bleſſings of the covenant. The book of the Law, containing the promiſes of God to the people of *Iſrael*, and the terms upon which theſe promiſes would be fulfilled to them, is therefore called *the book of the covenant*; and, becauſe when this book was read in the audience of the people, who promiſed that all that the Lord had ſaid they would do, and be obedient, there were beaſts offered in ſacrifice, with the blood of which *Moſes* ſprinkled the people, to denote the ſolemn ratification of God's covenant with them, this blood therefore hath the name given it of the [y] *blood of the covenant:* in like manner, the Goſpel being God's new covenant with all ſuch as believe in Jeſus Chriſt, as the *New Teſtament*, in which the Goſpel is recorded, may very properly be ſtiled *the book of the covenant*, ſo *the blood of Chriſt*, by which this covenant was confirmed, is expreſly called [z] *the blood of the covenant*. The covenant of Grace hath an eſſential reſpect to the ſacrifice of the croſs, as the foundation upon which it reſts; and for as much as in the *Lord's-Supper* we both ſacramentally and ſpiritually partake of this ſacrifice, it does very naturally ſuggeſt the thought of renewing, by and through this

[y] Exod. xxiv. 7, 8. [z] Heb. x. 29.

worthy ſacrifice our covenant with God, and the dedication of ourſelves and all that we have to him. In the 50th *Pſalm* we have an *Edict* from the King of Heaven, publiſhed in the following form of words, *Gather my ſaints together unto me, thoſe that have made a covenant with me by ſacrifice* This is ſpoken of God's antient people, who entered into covenant with him at the very time that the ſacrifice was killed and offered; whereas here, the ſacrifice is firſt offered, and offered once for all: and then, with an eye to this ſacrifice, we covenant with God, one perſon after another, and one generation after another, either ſingly, as in *Baptiſm*, or a whole ſociety together, as in the *Lord's-Supper*.

The firſt time of our approaching the *Lord's-Table* may, upon ſome accounts, be the moſt awful, as we then firſt of all communicate in the memorials of our Saviour's body and blood, and by theſe ſacred ſymbols confirm and ſolemnize our dedication to God; but then we renew this dedication, or covenant, every time we receive the holy communion. It is true, when Chriſt ſays, [a] *this cup is the New Teſtament*, or covenant, *in my blood*, the direct meaning ſeems to be no more than this, that the ſacramental wine is a figure or memorial of the blood of Chriſt, by which the new covenant was eſtabliſhed.

[a] Luke xxii. 19.

eſtabliſhed. However, becauſe in the *Lord's-Supper* we do ſacramentally eat the fleſh, and drink the blood of Chriſt, we may therefore be allowed to look on this Ordinance as a form of covenanting between God and us, and a ſeal of the covenant both on his part and ours. When *Abraham* is ſaid *to have received the ſign of circumciſion, a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of the faith*, what are we to underſtand by this metaphor of a ſeal, but the aſſurance which God gave *Abraham* [b], by this external ſign of the acceptableneſs of his faith, for the ſake of which he was pleaſed to eſtabliſh his covenant with him? The metaphor is borrowed from a well-known cuſtom of making things firm and certain by ſetting a ſeal to them. And why may not the *Lord's-Supper* be, for much the ſame reaſon, eſteemed a ſeal of God's covenant with us, being a viſible ſign or token of his covenant-favour towards us? The ſoul by faith may hear God ſpeaking to it after ſome ſuch manner as this.

" Come hither, O thou whom I love!
" I do here promiſe upon the body and
" blood of my Son to be thy God, and to
" do for thee all that can be expected from
" that title; and let this body and blood be
" witneſs between me and thee, for the per-
" formance of my promiſe.—With all poſſi-
" ble humility and grateful joy (replies the

[b] Rom. iv. 11.

" ſoul) do I accept thy offer, O moſt mer-
" ciful God; and on the ſame ſacred pledges
" I promiſe to be thine, taking Thee, O
" Father Almighty, for my God and Father,
" my ſovereign owner, and everlaſting por-
" tion; Thee, O Son of God, for my all-
" ſufficient Redeemer and only Advocate;
" and putting myſelf into the hands, and
" under the conduct, of the Holy Spirit as
" my Sanctifier and Guide, my Helper and
" Comforter, I preſent myſelf a living ſacri-
" fice, holy, acceptable to God, which is
" my reaſonable ſervice! I take the precepts
" of the Goſpel for the rule of all my ac-
" tions, and rely upon the promiſes of it as
" the immoveable foundation of my hopes.
" I reſign myſelf to thy diſpoſal, acknow-
" ledge myſelf bound to live to thy glory,
" and vow by thy grace to be obedient and
" faithful to the death. This is not the firſt
" time I have thus covenanted, but now
" I chearfully renew the engagement, be-
" ing ſenſible that I cannot be bound too
" faſt. I am continually in fear, if the
" cords be not ſtrengthened, leſt in this
" fluctuating world I ſhould break from my
" anchor, and be driven off from thee. I
" do here therefore again upon the body and
" blood of Chriſt ſwear to be obedient and
" faithful. Lord thou art witneſs to my
" oath, be thou my help!"——Can any
thing

thing be conceived more awful and binding than a covenant ſo tranſacted?

It follows that the *Lord's-Supper* is a means and ſign of our participating in the benefits of the covenant; ſuch as peace of conſcience, joy in the Holy Ghoſt, ſtrength of grace, and more overflowing hopes of future bleſſedneſs. I have not mentioned the pardon of ſin, becauſe whenever the ſinner repents, and applies to the blood of ſprinkling, his ſins are immediately forgiven him; his pardon is not delayed till he comes to the Sacrament; nor if a man comes to it in an unrepenting and unpardoned ſtate, does he go away juſtified, only for the merit of this action; which, I fear, is the miſtaken notion of ſome, who ſeem to make uſe of the Sacrament, as too many in the Church of *Rome* do of *Confeſſion* to a Prieſt, to pay off the old ſcore, that they may go upon a new one; a miſtake too dangerous to be ſlighted, and too abſurd to need a long confutation. All ſuch thoughts are effectually overturned by this one conſideration, that the only terms of forgiveneſs are *faith* and *repentance*; faith working by love, and repentance iſſuing in obedience; ſo that where theſe are, there is forgiveneſs, where theſe are wanting, in vain does any one take ſanctuary at the *Lord's-Table*, which can no more afford ſhelter to ſuch, than the altar did to the murderer that fled to it. The

Law is expreſs, [c] *Thou ſhalt take him from my altar that he may die.* But though God hath no where tied the forgiveneſs of ſin to mens receiving the Sacrament, yet ſince forgiveneſs itſelf, and the comfortable ſenſe of that forgiveneſs are two things, and the latter admits of variety of degrees, we may hope to find great advantages by conſcientiouſly attending on the *Lord's-Supper*, with regard to the aſſurance of God's forgiving love, and a larger effuſion of the ſpirit of light and holineſs, and conſolation upon us; of all this the Sacrament of the Supper is a proper means, as it tends to beget in us thoſe pious affections and holy purpoſes, on which God will never fail to confer his covenant bleſſings.

What thankfulneſs, what love, what indignation, what zeal, what deſire muſt the ſight of what is here beheld, raiſe in an ingenuous mind! Thankfulneſs to God, love to Jeſus, indignation againſt ſin, zeal in the ſervice of our dear Lord, and deſire of being approved and accepted of him. No Ordinance better fitted than this to kindle devout affections, wherein we have the Prince of life crucified before our eyes, ſuffering, bleeding, groaning, dying, and all this for our ſakes, to ſave us, and deſtroy ſin; a ſcene fitted to work on all our paſſions, and at the ſame time to engage the concurrence of

[c] Exod. xxi. 14.

of our reaſonable powers. Our affections in this Ordinance can never be wrought up to that degree (I mean the affections before-mentioned) but that our Reaſon will approve of it, and even require more; to which let me add, that receiving the Sacrament being, in reſpect of the ſincere Chriſtian, an act of obedience and love, both to God, and his Saviour, he may warrantably expect that it ſhall not go unrewarded. He comes becauſe it is his duty, and his duty is his delight; and will not God beſtow ſome marks of his ſpecial favour upon his willing and chearful ſervant? And then, as this Sacrament is a means, ſo, to every worthy receiver, it is a ſign of his participating in the benefits of the covenant. "For ſure-"ly, O my ſoul, this eating and drinking "was not ordained to be an empty idle ce-"remony! The thing ſignified, is thy feed-"ing by faith on the body and blood of "Chriſt; or rather thy communicating in "the glorious and happy effects of his bo-"dy broken, and blood ſhed. So indeed "thou doſt at other times, but more par-"ticularly now, that thy faith in a crucified "Saviour is actually exerted, and accompa-"nies the memorials of his death. He that "gave himſelf for thee on the croſs, and "gives himſelf to thee in the Sacrament of "the Supper, can withhold nothing from "thee."

Does not the very time ſeem to juſtify our expectation of partaking in *the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, *the love of God*, and *the fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt?* What time ſo proper to receive the manifeſtations of theſe, if we put ourſelves in a readineſs for them as when we are receiving the pledges of them, and renewing that covenant in which they are promiſed? Having *received gifts for men*, when will our King beſtow them, if not at his own Table?—This concludes the *fifth head*, *viz.* The death of Chriſt may be conſidered as that of our ſacrifice.

SECT. VII.

VI. OUR Redeemer died as a conqueror.—So it is expreſly ſaid, that [a] *through death he deſtroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their life-time ſubject to bondage.* The wiſdom of God is remarkably ſeen in defeating the malice of wicked men, and apoſtate ſpirits, by thoſe very means which they make uſe of to bring their evil devices to paſs. How great was Satan's triumph, when, having put it into the heart of *Judas* to betray Chriſt, and puſhed on the *Jews* and *Romans* to

[a] Heb. ii. 14, 15.

to crucify him, he saw the dreadful deed accomplished! Little thinking, that what he so rejoyced at would prove the most dangerous blow to his empire that he ever received. Christ had overcome the Devil in the wilderness; on the cross, his victory over him is rendered more compleat, by the influence of his death to destroy sin, and to abolish death the effect of sin. By the same act that *Sampson* brought death upon himself, he involved great numbers of the enemies of God in the same common destruction; but, strictly speaking, it was not *Sampson*'s death that was fatal to the *Philistines*, but the last act of his life; whereas, in the present case, death itself was the way of victory.

There have been instances of those who have conquered at death, and, having beaten their enemies, have then died well pleased. Lo, here is one who conquers by dying, not a common enemy, but the universal and last enemy of mankind, even death itself! He was born that he might die, and he died to rise again. *Our Saviour's destroying him that had the power of death*, is best explained by his [b] *abolishing death*; the same word being used in both places, though differently translated. [c] *It is appointed to all men once to die*; but then Christ died that he might destroy or make void that death which *passeth*

[b] Tim. i. 10. [c] Heb. ix. 27.

[d] *paſſeth upon all men*, by obtaining a reſurrection for all, and for all that do good a reſurrection to eternal life and happineſs; and by making void all that death had been doing for ſo many thouſand years, he fruſtrates, or makes void the deſign of that wicked ſpirit, through whoſe temptations man firſt loſt immortality, and by whom, as a ſort of conqueror, the human race is held in bondage to the fear of death and the grave. Chriſt the ſecond Adam, or head of our race, dying without having deſerved death, and dying in our ſtead recovers that immortality which the firſt Adam by his ſin had forfeited for himſelf and poſterity. Under this notion then, let us think of our dying Lord, when we ſhew forth his death in the Sacrament of the Supper. Let us think of him as vanquiſhing, not as vanquiſhed. Let his death be conſidered by us as the purchaſe of our immortality, and his reſurrection, which, in this caſe, we ought not to ſeparate from his death, being ſo nearly and ſo neceſſarily connected with it, as the pledge and aſſurance of it. By this means we ſhall find refuge in the meditations of Chriſt's death, eſpecially at the Table, againſt the fears of our own.

"Why ſhould I fear to die? Why fear "to paſs into the ſtate of the dead? Hath "not my Saviour taſted of the ſame bitter "cup?

[d] Rom. v. 12.

" cup? And was not his death ſoon follow-
" ed by his reſurrection? In like manner,
" though I die, I ſhall live again, be-
" cauſe Chriſt liveth. The interval indeed
" is like to be much longer between my
" death and my reſurrection, but what of
" that, ſince the ſouls of the faithful imme-
" diately go to be where Chriſt is, and I
" have the ſame certainty that I ſhall riſe
" in the laſt day, as that my Redeemer is
" already riſen; and that I ſhall riſe to
" dwell with Chriſt for ever, as that I live
" and die to him now. For this reaſon
" while I am commemorating the death of
" my Redeemer, I will take the occaſion to
" celebrate his conqueſt over death, and to
" comfort myſelf with the proſpect of that
" univerſal triumph of all his members over
" it, which is reſerved to compleat and
" crown the ſolemnities of the laſt day.
" [e] *O death, where is thy ſting? O grave,*
" *where is thy victory? The ſting of death is*
" *ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law, but*
" *thanks be to God, who giveth us the victo-*
" *ry through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*"

VII. We may conſider the death of Chriſt as the ground of his exaltation.—For becauſe [f] *he humbled himſelf and became obedient to death even the death of the croſs, therefore alſo hath God highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at*

[e] Cor. xv. 55,——57. [f] Phil. ii. 8,——11.

at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The whole world is ſubject to his authority, and all that can are to acknowledge it, by a voluntary ſubjection of themſelves to it. In another place, God himſelf is brought in ſaying to his Son, [g] *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a ſcepter of righteouſneſs is the ſcepter of thy kingdom! Thou haſt loved righteouſneſs and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladneſs above thy fellows*; advanced thee far above all thoſe, who, like thee, partake of the royal ſtate and dignity. From theſe two places compared together we learn, that what was ſo highly pleaſing to God in the death of his Son, and that for which he hath exalted him to his own right hand, inveſting him with all power both in heaven and in earth, is the obedience and ſubmiſſion to the will of God which he manifeſted therein; his love of holineſs and zeal for the advancement of it, which was the great motive to his undertaking the office of Mediator between God and man, and diſcovers itſelf throughout the execution of it.

From the humiliation of Chriſt the Son of God, which is the firſt ſcene that opens to

[g] Heb. i. 8, 9.

to us when we are participating in the memorials of his death, let us pass in our thoughts to his exaltation which soon followed. *He first suffered, and then entered into glory.* From hence I am instructed by what method I may gain the divine favour, and advance myself in it; not by praising his filial obedience, and resignation under sufferings, while I indulge to a fretful and repining temper myself; not by trusting to his righteousness, when I am without the love of righteousness in my own heart, and a stranger to the practice of it in my life. I cannot think, if I think soberly, that I can rise by any other way than that in which the Son of God did; that though I do not imitate him in his hatred of iniquity, yet for his sake who hated it, and because he hated it, God will bestow the same marks of his favour upon me, as on those that are most like him; and that a part of that glory, which he received as the reward of his holiness and obedience, shall descend on me, who have nothing to produce of either; not even the lowest degree of Gospel-sincerity. Let this convince me of the necessity of holiness, that I may please God, and animate me to endeavour after the highest measures of it, since in the same degree as I approach my Saviour now, I shall approach him in happiness and glory hereafter.——Once more,

SECT.

SECT. VIII.

VIII. THE death of Chriſt may be conſidered in the relation it bears to his ſecond appearance.—*For as often as we eat this his bread, and drink this his cup, we do ſhew his death till he come.* Come he will then, and till he does come, his church on earth is never to ceaſe ſhewing forth his death. [a] As *he was once offered to bear the ſins of many*, ſo *unto them that look for him ſhall he appear the ſecond time, without ſin (i. e.* an offering for ſin) *unto ſalvation.* He then came to purchaſe ſalvation, now to confer it. Theſe two, *viz.* the *firſt* and *ſecond* coming of Chriſt, how great ſoever the diſtance of time may be between the one and the other, ought to be joined in the Chriſtian's view, as they are mentioned together in the paſſage juſt now cited; *As often as ye eat this bread*, &c. We believe that Chriſt died, and to publiſh this belief we ſhew his death in this Ordinance; but we believe alſo that he roſe again from the dead, that he aſcended up far above all heavens, and that from thence he ſhall deſcend in the ſame manner as his diſciples ſaw him go into heaven; and, in teſtimony of this our belief, we ſhew his death *till he come.*

This

[a] Heb. ix. 28.

This Ordinance hath a double aſpect in one; it does at the ſame time look backward and forward, being a thankful commemoration of the meritorious tho' accurſed death which our Saviour ſuffered when he firſt came into the world, by virtue of which commemoration it becomes a joyful pledge of his ſecond glorious advent; and as ſuch he left it to his church, which is never to part with the pledge, till the perſon himſelf comes to redeem it by his preſence. An appearance this is which every lover of Chriſt ſhould rejoice to think on, ready to cry out in the extaſies of his paſſion,

" Come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly! In " this myſtery, I ſee thee darkly, as through " a glaſs. O when ſhall I behold thee face " to face! When will the ſun of righteouſ- " neſs break through all interpoſing veils, " that the ſhadows may be done away, and " his ſpouſe the church have the pleaſure " of ſeeing him in all his glory! Sweet are " the approaches he now makes to our ſouls; " theſe diſtant and cloudy views are a mighty " refreſhment; how much will the pleaſure " be encreaſed when I ſhall be [b] *abſent from* " *the body and preſent with the Lord!* Above " all, when I ſhall put on my glorified body, " and, with the many thouſands, and thou- " ſand times ten thouſand of his ſaints that " have ever lived upon earth, ſhall [c] *aſcend to* " *meet*

[b] 2 Cor. v. 8. [c] 1 Theſſ. iv. 17.

" *meet him in the air*, be publickly ab-
" ſolved and acknowledged by him, and
" by him preſented holy and without blame
" to God even our Father, ſee him ar-
" rayed in majeſty and love, and fall wor-
" ſhipping at his feet! Lord, what will our
" tranſports be!"

Did this ſacred action only lead us back to the death of Chriſt, and ſignify no more, it would be but a heartleſs and a melancholy entertainment, we ſhould ſit penſive at his Table, and have no objects before us, but ſuch as were fitted to feed our ſorrow; but, bleſſed be God, from the death of Chriſt it carries our view to the concluding day of the world, when he ſhall be revealed in the glory of the Father, and of his holy angels; and thine eyes, O Chriſtian, ſhall behold him, thine, and not another's! Thy Saviour died, but he is not periſhed; he ever liveth to govern the world, and intercede for his church; he is gone, but not with a deſign never more to return. And needs muſt this be a pleaſing meditation to one whoſe ſoul is continually reaching out after his Redeemer. The faithful *Iſraelite* was characterized by his earneſt expectation of the firſt coming of the Meſſiah; the true Chriſtian is known by the belief and hope of the ſecond coming of his Lord, and his care to prepare for it. The ſacrifices under the Law prefigured Chriſt's oblation of himſelf on the croſs; but that the

Jews

Jews had a diſtinct notion of this figurative meaning of their ſacrifices, and thereby had their faith ſupported and aſſiſted in regard of that ſacrifice which was to be offered in the fulneſs of time, is not ſo certain; whereas the Chriſtian hath in his hands the memorials of that precious death, as a kind of ſecurity of his coming again under a more godlike form. The firſt appearance of Chriſt put an end to the figures of the Law, this ſecond will aboliſh the ceremonial Ordinances of the Goſpel; and gladly will the church make this exchange of faith for viſion, of the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, of the ſign for the thing ſignified. For tho' the faithful love this Ordinance much, they love Jeſus himſelf more, for whoſe ſake alone they love the Inſtitution. [d] *Him having not ſeen they love, and in him, though now they ſee him not, believing, they rejoice with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory.*

" And is it ſo, that I love the appearance " of Chriſt, and am perſuaded that all thoſe " things that are ſaid concerning the awful " circumſtances of that appearance, and the " importance and everlaſting conſequences " of it, ſhall certainly come to paſs, Lord, " what manner of perſon then ought I to be " in all holy converſation and godlineſs! Is it " one end of my partaking of the *Lord's-* " *Supper* to declare my belief of Chriſt's

[d] 1 Pet. i. 8.

" coming again to judge the world, and to
" be glorified in his ſaints? And ought
" not this to mind me of another thing
" which I ſhould propoſe by it, even the
" making more ready for his coming, and
" behaving with a conſtant regard to that
" great day, that ſo I may be able to give
" up my account with joy? Let me watch,
" becauſe I know not the hour when our
" Lord ſhall come; and let me never for-
" get, that ſuch as I am at the time of my
" death I ſhall be found in judgment; and
" that my death is like to be conformable to
" my life."

REFLECTIONS.

THIS Diſcourſe will naturally lead us to make the few following Reflections.

SECT. I.

1. THE main uſe, and (with ſome reſtriction we may ſay) the ultimate deſign of the *Lord's-Supper* is the promoting of

of the life of God in the ſoul, and the practice of univerſal righteouſneſs and goodneſs; the nobleſt end that can be accompliſhed in us, being inſeparably connected with the glory of God and our own final felicity. And, perhaps, no one Ordinance advances this end ſo viſibly and effectually as this does, not only as we are hereby put in remembrance of our duty, and diſcern the manifold obligations to it, and do more directly and ſtrongly engage to walk circumſpectly, holy, and unblameably, but alſo, and principally, as the motives to a holy and chriſtian life drawn from the allurements of example, the ties of gratitude, the almoſt irreſiſtible force of love; from the moſt amiable and encouraging repreſentations of the Deity, the moſt inviting proſpects of another world, the glorious rewards of piety beyond the grave; and finally, from the worthleſneſs and inſignificancy of all thoſe things which are the uſual incentives to corrupt affections, and temptations to ſinful actions, are all comprized, and, as it were, cloſely crowded together in this one Inſtitution. What one thing is wanting to exerciſe the ſpirit of devotion, or to increaſe it? To actuate every virtue or grace, and to engage us to grow and improve in it? It is a ſort of ſummary of all the helps and incouragements which God hath vouchſafed us in the way to heaven. So that whoever does not take it in this view, but reſts in the pre-

ſent action, as having I know not what kind of charm and efficacy to do us a great deal of good, without making us a whit better, hath certainly a very wrong notion of it. Nor can Chriſtians be too often warned againſt ſplitting on this rock, which hath been fatal to ſo many. The *Lord's-Supper* is a venerable Inſtitution; but, after all, is no more than *an inſtrumental duty*, and ſo not to be compared with the inward power of Chriſtianity, and the ſubſtantial virtues of a good life; theſe are of indiſpenſible neceſſity, and eternal excellence; whereas all the external parts and offices of Religion are of more or leſs value according to their greater or leſs ſubſerviency, as means accompanied with the influences of divine Grace, to promote theſe ends; and conſequently, where theſe ends are not in any degree anſwered by them, all the attendance we give them, is in the ſight of God of no weight or value at all.

11. By the ſame rule the character of the perſon who hath a right to come to the *Lord's-Table*, and who therefore ought to accept of the invitation to come, will be eaſily ſettled. He that hath in ſome good meaſure already attained to that temper of mind, and leads that kind of life which this Ordinance was intended, and is ſo remarkably fitted to carry on and perfect, hath the qualifications of a worthy communicant. He hath faith, and hope, and cha-

charity, is humble and penitent, loves his Saviour more than all, makes conſcience of every known duty, and flees every known ſin; and having the thing itſelf, which we call Religion, cannot want a competent knowledge of it, which he will endeavour to render more clear and comprehenſive; he may be very imperfect in all theſe reſpects, but will he therefore abſtain from the *Lord's-Supper*, when, by devoutly attending upon that Inſtitution, he may reaſonably hope to be aſſiſted in going on to perfection? His very ſenſe of his imperfections, as long as he does not allow himſelf in them, is a good ſign, and ought at once to encourage him, and to make him willing to accept of all the helps and directions he can get, in order to his gaining greater heights. When he is aſked, why he does not come to the *Holy Communion*, can he appeal to his own heart, that if he thought it his duty, all circumſtances conſidered, he would not, upon any account whatever, ſtay away? How eaſily may this be turned upon him, and made uſe of to convince him, to his own great comfort, of the very thing he doubts of, *viz.* his right, and conſequently his obligation to communicate. Would he rejoice to come if all hinderances were removed? Then it is plain he loves the duty; he gladly would communicate, if he thought he might, and endeavours to get all the ſa-

tisfaction he can in the matter; that is, he diſcharges his duty in other inſtances, and would do ſo in this, but that he fears his ſin would be greater in coming, than it is in ſtaying away. And is not this a proof of that good conſcience, which, if any thing can do it, muſt entitle a man to this privilege?

But, perhaps, there are thoſe who fancy ſomething more is neceſſary than ſincerity; or that the danger is ſo exceeding great of communicating upon a miſtaken ſuppoſition of our having a right when we have none, that nothing but a certainty of our having that right will juſtify us in runing ſuch a dreadful hazard. As to the former, if ſincerity, and not any particular eminent degrees of holineſs be the condition of ſalvation, there can be no good ground ſurely to imagine that ſome further condition is neceſſary to qualify us for commemorating our Saviour; if the latter be their fear, and this their fear be well-grounded, how very few, that had well-conſidered the thing, would venture to receive, when the number is probably ſo ſmall of thoſe who can be ſaid to be certain of their integrity. But let us not frighten ourſelves where there is no need. If we ſhould come to the *Lord's-Supper*, not being, ſtrictly ſpeaking, meet to partake of it, there is nothing in this action, being done upon a miſtake, but we

we may very well ſuppoſe God will overlook and pardon, as long as we come out of conſcience, and with a pious deſign, and, if we are yet ſhort of a Chriſtian ſtature, are endeavouring every day to come up to it: nor is there any thing in the nature of the Inſtitution itſelf that ſhould give us theſe terrible apprehenſions of it; for let us ſuppoſe that we had nothing relating to this matter in ſcripture, but the account which the *Evangeliſts* have delivered to us of the Inſtitution, *viz.* [a] That *Jeſus took bread, and bleſſed it, and brake it, and gave it to the diſciples, and ſaid, Take, Eat, this is my body:* and that *he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, ſaying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Teſtament which is ſhed for many for the remiſſion of ſins*; and that, at the concluſion of this holy feaſt, *having ſung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.* Is there any thing in the words of the Inſtitution, or in the circumſtances of that firſt Supper, that ſhould deter any Chriſtian of a ſober converſation from doing as he is here commanded? On the contrary, is there not every thing to invite, and in a manner force his compliance; the nature of the action, being nothing elſe but a feſtival Supper, of a religious kind, the condeſcending familiarity of the Maſter with his diſciples, and the deſign of it to keep up the me-

[a] Mat. xxvi. 26,—30.

mory of their friend and benefactor? And may we not therefore ſafely conclude, that nothing we meet with in any other part of ſcripture can be inconſiſtent with the incouragement which every upright ſoul may draw from the original Inſtitution, unleſs there is ſome particular reaſon added for it?

But now that paſſage in St. Paul's firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians* (which is the place that hath given birth to ſo many groundleſs ſcruples and terrors, or at leaſt hath been made uſe of to feed them) hath nothing of that nature; it contains a reproof of ſome in that Church for their receiving the *Lord's-Supper* in ſo ſcandalous, ſo irreverent, and ſo diſorderly a manner, that they might very well be ſaid *not to diſcern the Lord's body*; not obſerving that decorum, and ſobriety at the *Lord's-Table*, which all Chriſtians ought to do at their common meals, and much leſs making a due diſtinction between that ſacred repaſt, and their uſual ones. Who could have ſaid leſs on this occaſion than the Apoſtle does? Or who not think that a like irreverence would unfit us for the ordinary worſhip of God? Notwithſtanding which, we do not reckon ourſelves excuſed from coming to the houſe of God, but only obliged to behave with greater reverence when we are there. It is true, the Apoſtle ſays, that [b] *he that eateth and drinketh unwor-*

[b] 1 Cor. xi. 29.

unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body; but let the Apostle himself explain what he means by *eating and drinking unworthily*, and what by that *damnation* that is hereby incurred. The irregularities of the *Corinthian Church*, which occasioned this part of the Apostle's letter to them, will explain the former, and what they suffered upon this account, the latter; *for this cause* (as it follows in the very next verse) [c] *many among you are weak and sickly, and many sleep*, or die; so that bodily disorders, sickness and death, were that *judgment* (for so the word signifies) which such unworthy receivers eat and drank to themselves; not *damnation*, as we commonly understand it, of future and everlasting punishment, as is plain to a demonstration from what the Apostle himself saith, that they were thus [d] *judged* or *chastened of the Lord*, that they *might not be condemned with the world*. And this will help to clear the other expression (*ver.* 27.) of their being *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*; it signifies their shewing such a disrespect to the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood, as would expose them to the tokens of God's displeasure here mentioned.

I shall only add, that this instance of *severity* was no more than necessary, in the beginning of Christianity, to beget in the minds of

[c] 1 Cor. xi. 30. [d] Ver. 32.

of men a proper reverence for the Inſtitutions of the Goſpel; and is agreeable to the method ordinarily obſerved both by God and men, in making examples of thoſe who are guilty of the firſt acts of contempt and diſobedience againſt their laws and conſtitutions. Thus concerning the man that was found gathering ſticks on the Sabbath-Day, God thus makes known his pleaſure, [e] *He ſhall ſurely be put to death, all the congregation ſhall ſtone him with ſtones without the camp.* Thus *Ananias* and *Sapphira* his wife, for bringing part of the price of the poſſeſſion which they had ſold, as if it had been the whole, (which is called [f] *lying to the Holy Ghoſt*) are both of them ſtruck dead upon the ſpot. This inſtance of *ſeverity*, added to that other before-mentioned of the infliction of diſeaſes and death upon ſeveral members of the *Corinthian Church*, may ſeem not very well to ſuit with the nature of the Goſpel law, which is a law of love, yet when it is conſidered that this was in order to ſecure the greater veneration to the Chriſtian Religion, then in its infancy, and to convince the world that it came from God, ſo it was under his peculiar regard and protection, we ſhall no longer wonder at the reaſon of it.

[e] Numb. xv. 35. [f] Acts v. 3.

SECT.

SECT. II.

III. WE may from hence ſatisfy ourſelves as to the *Preparation* neceſſary to every particular communion. Am I called to ſhew forth the death of Chriſt? And am I in a ſtate and diſpoſition of mind for this ſacred action? Have I clean hands, and a pure heart? Am I under no ſuch diſorders either of body or mind, as would incapacitate me for attending upon this Ordinance without diſtraction, and receiving advantage by it? Why then ſhould I baniſh myſelf from it? It may be I have not been able to ſpend the uſual time in the exerciſes of devotion preparatory thereto; but ſince this hath been through no fault of my own, not out of *choice* but *neceſſity*, and I think myſelf notwithſtanding, in a tolerable degree diſpoſed for the ordinary worſhip of the *Lord's-Day*, ſo as to be able to compoſe my thoughts, and raiſe my affections towards heavenly things, why ſhould I imagine myſelf forbidden to approach the *Lord's-Table?* Is much more time neceſſary to empty my heart of worldly thoughts and cares than I am maſter of? If ſo, I have reaſon to fear that I love the world abundantly too well, or am too much involved in the buſineſs of it, and ſhall therefore do better to ſet myſelf to remove the cauſe of my

my complaints, I mean that inordinate affection to the world, which makes it ſo difficult for me to get leave to go aſide and converſe with God, than letting this alone to be obliged to have recourſe to certain extraordinary acts of meditation, prayer and humiliation, at the approach of every communion, and to lay the main ſtreſs of my Preparation at leaſt, if not of my Religion, upon theſe.

If this neither be the cauſe of mens thinking ſuch a particular portion of time imployed in devotional exerciſes abſolutely neceſſary to their Preparation, let them enquire whether there be not ſomething of ſuperſtition in this, which is a thing that will not add either to the comfort or credit of their Religion. Does not our fear of God himſelf degenerate into ſuperſtition, when it breeds a ſervility of ſpirit, and perpetual diſquietudes, making us apprehend his diſpleaſure for things which we do not ſee any intrinſick evil in, and do not know that he hath forbidden? In like manner, is not our regard to any Ordinance ſuperſtitious, when we are afraid to attend upon that Ordinance, becauſe we have not had time to do more by way of Preparation for it, than is any where required of us? For where is it ſaid that we muſt ſpend ſo much time in Preparation for the *Lord's-Supper*, or not come to it? Methinks, I would not have ſincere, and devout ſouls fetter the free ſpirit of Religion with unneceſſary

ceſſary and even prejudicial rules, and lay burthens and limitations on themſelves, which God hath not laid upon them : as long as they guard againſt extremes, I am far from diſſuading or diſcouraging their indulging to their pious inclinations ; on the contrary, I ſhall take leave to offer them a word or two of advice, as to the manner of imploying their time, when they have it, that they may come to this holy feſtival with the greateſt compoſure and elevation of ſoul they poſſibly can.

Let them examine whether as to the habitual temper of their minds, and the general tenor and flow of their lives, they go backward or forward in their Religion. Let them be thankful for any victories they have been enabled by the Grace of God to gain over themſelves and the world, and for any progreſs they have made in the chriſtian life ; and at the ſame time humble themſelves before God for any defects which upon inquiry appear to them ; that their conformity to the example and precepts of Jeſus is no greater, and that they are not more ſteadily and powerfully influenced by his love. Let the Grace of God that hath wrought effectually in them, notwithſtanding all their infirmities, animate them to go on chearfully the reſt of their way ; and by the inſtances wherein they have been wanting in the improvement of this Grace, let them

them be taught to be more watchful, circumſpect, and abounding in good works for the future. Let them reflect whether there be not ſome particular part of their conduct, which does not ſo well ſuit with the rules of their chriſtian profeſſion, nor match ſo agreeably with other parts of their character; whether there be any liberties or indulgencies, which, though innocent in themſelves, yet becauſe of their having proved ſnares and temptations to them, they ought not to have allowed themſelves in; any gift or grace that needs to be ſtirred up; and let them ſtrive to come behind in no one thing, whereby they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

As to *Meditation*, let them eſpecially make choice of thoſe things for the entertainment of their minds, which have the moſt apparent tendency to weaken their engagements with the preſent world, and to ſtrengthen the union of their hearts to God and Jeſus, thoſe transforming objects; to enlighten them with juſter notions of the nature of true Religion and godlineſs, and to ſhew them the neceſſity, the beauty, and the advantages of it, that ſo all the ſprings and principles of activity in the chriſtian life may, as much as poſſible, be reduced to this one of *holy love and delight*, or at leaſt may not interfere with it; ſuch things as will warm their hearts with ſentiments of zeal and gratitude,

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render ſin more hateful and deteſtable in their eyes, and quicken their deſires after the perfection of the heavenly world. *Meditations* of this kind would have the happieſt effect upon them to awaken their drowſy, or to chear and enliven their drooping minds, and by that means would make them approach the *Lord's-Table* with equal care and ſatisfaction.

For the ſake of ſome let me add, by way of caution, that in our Preparations for the *Sacrament* there is need of prudence, that while we are afraid of taking too little time, we do not impoſe taſks upon ourſelves beyond our ſtrength, and tire and exhauſt thoſe ſpirits which we ſhould only exerciſe; the conſequence of which will be, that we ſhall have no life and vigour left when we come to the *Lord's-Table*, and ſo be ready to impute to our indevotion what is really the effect of our indiſcretion. Having made us men, creatures compoſed of fleſh and ſpirit, God requires not of us the ſame flame and intention of devotion, as from angels, but *conſidereth our frame, and remembereth that we are but duſt*, which is reaſon enough why we ourſelves ſhould do it.

IV. We may from hence too form a judgment of worthy receiving as well as of the worthy receiver. As he is the moſt worthy receiver, who hath moſt of *Jeſus* in him, of his mind, his image, his ſpirit, ſo that is the moſt worthy manner of receiving that flows from

from theſe principles. It does not conſiſt in rapturous flights of the imagination, and ſtrong workings of the paſſions, which have their foundation in the natural conſtitution, more than in a clear diſcernment of the ſpiritual meaning and intent of the Ordinance, and a lively ſenſe of the great benefits reſulting from it. When I have Jeſus Chriſt evidently ſet forth as crucified before my eyes, am I moved with the thought of it after much the ſame manner as I am at the recital of a ſad ſtory, and does the impreſſion wear away like that of *a tale that is told?* However I may flatter myſelf, theſe are not ſo much the operations of Grace as of nature. The Chriſtian that is aſſiſted by this Ordinance to ſee the great evil of ſin, and the love of Jeſus in delivering from it, and to perceive the many forcible motives and engagements to all holineſs of converſation that he here meets with, ſo as to be more in love with his duty, (by which only he can know that he loves his Saviour more) to have his pious reſolutions more eſtabliſhed, the tenderneſs and ſenſibility of his conſcience increaſed, and to be brought more under the influence of the doctrines and precepts of Chriſtianity in all his actions, this is he who receives moſt worthily, whether he hath, or hath not, the happineſs of warm and melting affections; for we are not to make an eſtimate of ourſelves by theſe, but by other marks;

marks; theſe, it is true, are very deſirable things, and to be ſought after, though not in the firſt place; but then thy are not neceſſary in all, and perhaps in none at all times, and they may deceive us, not being joined with the things now mentioned; whereas theſe latter are of ſuch a nature, that in caſe we find them in ourſelves, we cannot be miſtaken in arguing from them to our own advantage.

In regard to the *Thoughts* and *Meditations* that are moſt proper at the *Lord's-Table*, ſome help and direction may be had from what hath been offered in the preceding Diſcourſe, and ſtill more from the *Holy Scripture*; provided in the courſe of our reading we remark ſuch paſſages, and endeavour to imprint them on our minds and memories, as will very natually bear to be applied to the Sacrament of the Supper, and be of uſe to feed the flame of devotion while we are partaking of it.

v. There ſeems to be no great occaſion for any diſtinct rules concerning our behaviour after the *Holy Communion*. For what ſhould our behaviour be afterwards, but the ſame as it ought to be before, and at all other times, that is, uniformly holy and good? A fancy that we are obliged to greater ſtrictneſs the next day, or following week, after a Sacrament, than we are when it hath

been longer paſt, may be of ill conſequence, and will certainly be ſo, if we think the more ſtrict we are before and after a Sacrament, the leſs care of our behaviour we are obliged to in the time between. A life of chriſtian piety, being the end deſigned to be promoted by every duty of divine worſhip, particularly by the *Lord's-Supper*, is what we are to be concerned for, and not to truſt to occaſional heats and ſtarts in Religion.

VI. We here ſee the advantage of *frequent Communions*, and the anſwer to the common objection againſt them. The advantage is, that theſe frequent communions tend to promote our progreſs in the chriſtian life; the objection againſt them, that communions if frequent will loſe their *ſolemnity*. But I very much doubt that in this caſe people deceive themſelves with a wrong notion of *ſolemnity*. Do they mean that they ſhall not not come with an unaccountable awe and dread upon their minds? And what if they do not, as long as they are ſerious and devout. We ſhould think it very odd reaſoning ſhould we hear men take up a reſolution not to worſhip God all the week long in their families or cloſets, to the end the duties of God's worſhip may be the more ſolemn, when performed in his own houſe, and on his own day. And yet the caſes are not altogether unlike. An habitual ſeriouſneſs and fervour of ſpirit is undoubtedly, in the

the nature of things, to be expected from the frequent returns of holy duties, and not from long intermiſſions of them; and the more habitually ſerious we are, ſo much the better, and in ſo much the better preparation ſhall we be to wait upon God in every Ordinance. Let us not therefore of choice take up with very rare communions; or, where circumſtances will admit of it, be againſt having them more frequently. If we communicate ſeldom, becauſe we cannot communicate oftener, we muſt be contented, and do as well as we can; but by no means be the better pleaſed with our ſituation in this reſpect, and think we have more reverence for the *Lord's-Supper* than ſome have, for no other reaſon than that we do not come to it ſo often. In a word, let us ſtudy how to make this and every duty of Religion profitable to the building us up in holineſs and comfort through faith unto ſalvation.

A

TREATISE

ON THE

OBLIGATION

OF

The PROFESSORS of CHRISTIANITY
to celebrate the LORD's-SUPPER.

WITH

An ANSWER to the PRINCIPAL EXCUSES for neglecting it.

1741.

Of the OBLIGATION *on* Chriſtians *to celebrate the* LORD'S-SUPPER.

HAVING in a former Treatiſe explained the nature and deſign of the *Lord's-Supper*, becauſe, notwithſtanding the apparent excellency and obligation of this Inſtitution of our Saviour, too many, by profeſſion Chriſtians, indulge themſelves in the neglect of it; I ſhall diſtinctly conſider the obligation lying upon the diſciples of Chriſt to communicate in the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper*, and ſome of the principal reaſons which hinder the moſt from complying with this obligation.

That you may clearly apprehend the obligation lying upon the diſciples of Chriſt to communicate in the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper*, I would offer the following Conſiderations to your ſerious and moſt impartial thoughts.

1. Conſider the expreſneſs of the command. Can any words be more plain and direct than thoſe which we meet with in the account given of this Inſtitution by the

Evangeliſt *Luke* —[a] *This do in remembrance of me* — There might have been little more room to queſtion whether this was not a temporary command, a command to continue in force only while the Apoſtles lived, there being none preſent but the Apoſtles when this Sacrament was inſtituted, if the very reaſon or ground of the command did not ſhew the contrary. The bread and wine in the Sacrament ſignify the body and blood of Chriſt, his *body broken*, and his *blood ſhed for the remiſſion of ſins*; and unleſs any one will ſay, that we have not the ſame concern in the death of Chriſt, and the attonement for ſin made by it as the *firſt Chriſtians*, the argument from hence will I think be unanſwerable: that the ſacrifice of Chriſt being intended alike for the benefit of all ages, and the covenant of Grace thereby confirmed extending to all, the Inſtitution of the *Supper*, which was deſigned to lead the thoughts and meditations of Chriſtians to this ſacrifice muſt equally regard all; eſpecially if we add the words juſt mentioned, that the Apoſtles were to do this *in remembrance of Chriſt*; i. e. after he was gone from them they were to repeat this action, in order to keep up the remembrance of him in the world, and to preſerve it freſh in themſelves.

It is evident at firſt ſight that the celebrating his memory among his diſciples is in general

[a] Luke xxii. 19.

general hereby intended. And is not the conſequence viſible, that if the followers of Chriſt, in all ages of the world, are bound to honour the memory of their Saviour, and as much need the aſſiſtance of an outward rite to this purpoſe, as Chriſt's immediate diſciples did, then this precept muſt include the one as well as the other? Yea more eſpecially thoſe who came after, ſince they muſt be more in danger of forgeting their Maſter than his firſt diſciples were, who perſonally knew him, or converſed with thoſe that did, and were continually talking about the wonders of his life and death, and reſurrection and aſcenſion, which were then freſh tranſactions? They might better ſure diſpenſe with an Ordinance dedicated to the memory of Chriſt, who never almoſt ſuffered him to be out of their minds and mouths, than following ages, to whom therefore this command appears to belong from the very reaſon of it ſubjoined, *viz. that it was to be in remembrance of Chriſt.* And that there might be the leaſt reaſonable doubt left about the perpetuity of this Ordinance, the Apoſtle *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, (and in them the Chriſtians of ſucceeding times) [b] *That as often as they eat this bread, and drank this cup, they did ſhew the Lord's death till he came*——an expreſſion which would have been exceeding improper if the Inſtitution was

[b] 1 Cor. xi. 26.

was to have an end ſo ſoon after it began. How could the diſciples of Chriſt be ſaid *to ſhew* or repreſent *his death* in this Ordinance *till his coming*, if thoſe only of the *firſt age* were to ſhew it forth after this manner? Do not the words manifeſtly imply, that as Chriſt would always have a Church upon earth, ſo it would be the duty of the members of it, one generation after another, to commemorate the death of their Maſter till he *ſhould appear the ſecond time, and receive them to himſelf*, when there would be no occaſion to do it? The command therefore I apprehend, as taking in all ages, is undeniable, and conſequently the obligation upon all to obſerve it; for I hope there are none ſo abſurd, as while they profeſs to believe the *truth* of the Goſpel, to deny their being bound by the *commands* of it.

If the Goſpel be true, then every precept it contains is from God, has the ſtamp of his authority, and is the reſult of his infinite wiſdom; and if ſo, what other meaning can *voluntary* diſobedience to any command bear but this, that the diſobedient perſon regards not the authority of the moſt high God, and queſtions the wiſdom of his precepts? For had he that awe of the divine authority, and that perſuaſion of the divine wiſdom in any Command or Inſtitution, which ſhould and does poſſeſs every pious breaſt, he would not *knowingly* and *wilfully* refuſe his compliance

ance with any one injunction of the Gospel: and indeed he might as consistently withhold his obedience from one command as another, and from all as do it avowedly from any one, according to the reasoning of the Apostle [c] *James, that he who keepeth the whole law, and offends in one point*, i. e. voluntarily and habitually, *is guilty of all*; guilty of presumptuously disowning that authority which supports all the rest. This is the language of wilfully neglecting any command of God, which holds of the *Lord's-Supper*, as well as of other commands of the Gospel. Wilful disobedience here as in all other cases admits of no excuse, amounting to a practical denial of the authority and wisdom of God in his laws.

It nearly concerns the absenters from the *Lord's-Table* to take this matter into their most serious consideration. Are they perfectly negligent and thoughtless about receiving the *Lord's-Supper?* Do they go on one year after another without troubling themselves about it; never inquiring whether it be or be not a command of the Gospel, and whether it does or does not reach them, and even putting the thought from them when they have a suspicion it does? Have they no solicitude at all upon their spirits to approve themselves unto God by walking in all his commandments blameless, desirous to know their duty in its whole extent, and

[c] Jam. ii. 10.

and to practise every part of it? For certain if this be not *wilful disobedience*, it is a very near approach to it, and carries in it a great share of the same guilt: nor can it I think be supposed of any sincere Christian, that he should pay so little respect to the commands of the Gospel as this; every such person must be under a real concern to know his duty in every instance, (particularly with regard to his communicating in the *Lord's-Supper*) and to discharge it when known; but though he takes some care, yet it may be not all that he ought, to clear up the matter to himself, and to disengage himself from all hindrances, that he may not live in the neglect of that which is so expressly a command of Christ.

11. Consider the Person who is the immediate author of this command, and in memory of whom it is appointed. This is no other than Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, to whom we acknowledge ourselves infinitely indebted, and would be thought to have the greatest affection and regard. And certain it is, that we have the greatest reason for this acknowledgment, in as much as this most excellent Person has given us proofs of his kindness to us and concern for our happiness, the most surprising that can be imagined. [d] *Being in the form of God, and having a glory with him before the world was, he did*, for our sakes, *take*

[d] Phil. ii. 6, &c. John xvii. 5.

take on him the form of a ſervant; and being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf yet lower, and became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs; and to what end, but that he might expiate our ſins by his blood, and obtain eternal redemption for us? The principle of all that our bleſſed Saviour did and ſuffered upon earth, and tranſacts in heaven, is love to the ſinful children of men. [e] *They being partakers of fleſh and blood, he alſo himſelf willingly took part of the ſame, that through death he might deſtroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time ſubject to bondage. For verily he took not hold of the fallen angels* to reſtore them, but fallen men, *the ſeed of Abraham.* So that it muſt be owned, that never was love like that of our Saviour's, as never ſorrow was like his. And love requires love, the love of the *Redeemer* the love of the *redeemed.* And there is no Chriſtian but makes profeſſion of love to Chriſt, upon which let me beg you to reflect a little.

Hath [f] Chriſt loved me and given himſelf for me? And do I really love him? Then ſhall I be ready to do every thing that is neceſſary to evidence the ſincerity of my own love, and the ſenſe I have of the unexampled greatneſs of his; whatever is a proper and indiſpenſable teſt of theſe I ſhall joyfully com-

[e] Heb. ii. 14, &c. [f] Gal. ii. 20.

comply with. And is not this the teſt which our Lord himſelf has given his diſciples, [g] *If ye love me, keep my commandments?* Among theſe commandments our ſhewing forth his death in the Sacrament of the Supper is one; to which therefore we are obliged as a teſtimony of our love to the Perſon who lays this command upon us: and what adds very much to the obligation is, that this great friend of ours is not only the author of this Inſtitution, but the object of it too; it has an immediate reference to him, was appointed in honour of him, and is conſecrated to his memory; and for the ſame reaſon then as we are bound to love Chriſt, and to have our hearts filled with ſentiments of gratitude to him, muſt we not be obliged to expreſs our love and gratitude by our love to his memory, and earneſt deſire to do him all the honour of which we are capable; wiſhing that we were able to do more, and could perſuade others to entertain the ſame affectionate ſentiments towards him, as we ourſelves have? Muſt we not acknowledge that we are obliged to all this; and by conſequence, to put ourſelves in a condition to come without any more delay to the *Lord's-Table*, to which we have been ſo often invited? The deſign of this Ordinance being to do honour to the Redeemer, and to perpetuate the memory of his virtues, and

[g] John xiv. 15.

and of his dying love in the world, ſuch a deſign every lover of Chriſt muſt heartily approve, and think himſelf happy if he can be a means of accompliſhing it in any degree.

III. Conſider the nature and properties of this Inſtitution. It is the moſt diſtinguiſhing of all the precepts of the Goſpel—exceeding plain and intelligible—eaſy to be performed—and greatly to our advantage. Let us briefly revolve theſe ſeveral things in our thoughts, and we ſhall be more ſenſible of the obligation we are under to do as our Saviour has commanded us.

1. It is the moſt diſtinguiſhing command of the Goſpel; I mean of any that relate to the ſtated ordinary duty of Chriſtians. *Baptiſm* is indeed a peculiar Inſtitution of the Chriſtian Religion; but then beſides that *Baptiſm* in regard to far the greateſt part of Chriſtians is adminiſtered in Infancy, and ſo is not their own act, we may obſerve that it is *once for all*, being an initiating Ordinance, by which we are ſolemnly introduced into the church and fellowſhip of Chriſt, after which we are concerned for no more, but to walk worthy of our dedication to the ſervice of God in this Ordinance. *Baptiſm* is not to be repeated, whereas the *Lord's-Supper* is a ſtanding part of chriſtian worſhip, and a duty which the diſciples of Chriſt are to perform again and again, as they have opportu-

opportunity; [h] *As often as ye eat this bread.* Now I beſeech you obſerve how the argument from hence proceeds. Here is a ſtated permanent duty of the chriſtian ſociety, and which at the ſame time is the moſt direct and viſible mark or badge of our being the diſciples of Chriſt: when we receive the *Lord's-Supper* every communicant takes of the ſacramental bread and wine, and by eating and drinking not only as a religious action, but an action deſigned to be commemoratory of the redemption of the world by Jeſus Chriſt, publickly avows his relation to Chriſt as his Lord and Maſter, and glories in it, even in the croſs of Chriſt, which of old was [i] *to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs*; ſuch is the declaration which every communicant makes at the *Lord's-Table.* It is the known language of his actions, ſo that if he was to ſay aloud—"I own myſelf a diſciple of Chriſt; I rejoice in my being ſo; and am reſolved to make his Goſpel the rule of all my actions"—it would not be more expreſſive and ſignificant of the thing, than the act of participating itſelf is.

The *Lord's-Supper* is ſo remarkable a part of the Chriſtian Inſtitution, that * *Pliny* writing to the Emperor of *Rome* about the Chriſtians, who at that time were liable to be puniſhed for their Religion by the publick

[h] 1 Cor. ii. 26. [i] 1 Cor. i. 23. * Epiſt. l. 10. Ep. 97.

lick laws, gives this account of them, which he had received from ſome *Apoſtates*. " That " they were wont to aſſemble on a ſtated " day before it was light, (being then under " perſecution) and to ſing a hymn to Chriſt " as a God ; binding themſelves by a *Sa-* " *crament*, not to the commiſſion of any " wickedneſs, but that they would avoid " thefts, robberies, adulteries, would make " good their engagements, and when called " upon, not deny what was committed to " their truſt." And this being ſo, that the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper* is ſo conſiderable a part of the worſhip of Chriſtians as ſuch, and ſo peculiar to it, in which they declare themſelves the diſciples of Chriſt, how very ſtrange and unaccountable is it, that there ſhould be ſo many who ſeem to have no regard at all to this Ordinance, living and dying in the neglect of it. Would not theſe very perſons eſteem a church or a community of Chriſtians very *imperfect*, in which the *Lord's-Supper* was never adminiſtred? And muſt not they then be very *imperfect* Chriſtians, who having opportunities of attending upon this Goſpel-Inſtitution, continue time after time to decline them? Surely ſuch as theſe will be condemned out of their own mouths. If a church would be *imperfect* without the *Lord's-Supper*, a ſingle Chriſtian culpably depriving himſelf of it muſt be ſo too.

2. Another thing obſervable in this Inſtitution of the *Lord's-Supper*, and which renders the neglect of it more criminal is, that it is exceeding plain and intelligible; I mean as it lies in the ſcripture, from whence we are taught that this Ordinance has the nature of a religious feaſt, kept in memory of Jeſus Chriſt, the *author and finiſher of our faith.* While we are *eating this bread*, and *drinking this cup*, we are to think of Chriſt particularly as bearing the puniſhment of our ſins in his body on the croſs, and ſheding his blood for the remiſſion of them; in this ſenſe it is eaſy *to diſcern the Lord's body*, tho' not in that which the church of *Rome* has invented; that indeed would put our faith to the ſtretch, by the utter contradiction it carrries in it to our ſenſes and Reaſon, and being itſelf an *impoſſibility*, cannot poſſibly be conceived. For who can conceive of a human body preſent under the appearances of bread and wine, and this wholly and entire in a thouſand different places at the ſame time, offered by the prieſt, eaten by the people, and glorified in heaven? Such a doctrine as this is abſolutely unintelligible, and a ſhort but deciſive proof of the *fallibility* of that church which has decreed it. We may confidently ſay it *may err*, when it has *actually erred* ſo very groſsly. But the doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* is not a doctrine of ſcripture. What the ſcripture teaches con-

concerning the relation which the *Lord's-Supper* has to Chriſt is eaſily to be apprehended, being only that of the *ſign* to the thing *ſignified*. This Ordinance is intended to awaken our thoughts and remembrance of Chriſt, which it almoſt unavoidably does when we know before-hand that it was appointed for this end, and this is the end we propoſe in coming to it.

3. To an ingenuous and devout mind the practice of this duty is as eaſy, as apprehending the nature and deſign of it. Nothing can be leſs burthenſome than the outward action; for what is it we are called to do, but to partake of bread and wine in memory of our beſt friend? And is this ſo hard a command, that ſome perſons are brought with ſo much difficulty to comply with it? We may reaſon here after the ſame manner as *Naaman's* ſervants did with him; [k] *If the Prophet had bid thee do ſome great thing, wouldſt thou not have done it; how much rather then when he ſaith to thee, waſh, and be clean?* The means of cure would put him to ſo little trouble, that if he had not tried them he would have deſerved to carry his leproſy with him to the grave; ſo in the preſent caſe, there are no proofs, though never ſo painful, which we ſhould not have been ready to give of our devotedneſs to Chriſt, both for his ſake and our own. And ſhall

[k] 2 Kings v. 13.

we deny him this ſmall requeſt, that we now and then ſet apart ſome time to celebrate his memory together by this ſolemn rite? Conſider he has not ſuffered the heavy yoke of *Jewiſh* ceremonies to come upon the neck of his diſciples; inſtead of this multitude of ritual obſervances which the Law enjoined, the very number of which would have made them grievous if nothing elſe had done it, our Maſter has ſubſtituted but this one ſimple Inſtitution of a ceremonial nature to be obſerved by Chriſtians after their admiſſion into the church. And as to the outward action itſelf, it is ſo inconſiderable, that was it to return much oftener than it does in moſt ſocieties, we ſhould not think much to perform it; and this among other reaſons, out of thankfulneſs to our bleſſed Lord for the liberty he has purchaſed for his church from the bondage of *Jewiſh* ceremonies. It is true this duty has an inward as well as an outward part; but the inward part is of a *moral* nature, conſiſting in the exerciſes of love and gratitude and devotion, which no pious perſon will think unreaſonable, ſince to all perſons ſo diſpoſed they muſt yield very great delight and ſatisfaction; which puts me in mind of the laſt thing obſervable in this command.

4. That it is very advantageous. It is as much our privilege as our duty to eat and drink at the *Lord's-Table*; the more inexcuſable

ble therefore we if we cannot be perſuaded to come when intereſt conſpires with gratitude to enforce our duty upon us. I ſhowed under the firſt part that this federal eating and drinking is expreſſive of a very great privilege enjoyed by the worthy communicant, as well as of an obligation incumbent upon him, *viz.* the favour and friendſhip of Almighty God, together with all the bleſſings which can be ſuppoſed to flow from thence; and ſuch a privilege as this muſt certainly greatly inhance our obligations; our obligation to receive the *Lord's-Supper* being invited thereto, and our obligation to walk worthy of it afterwards.

The *Lord's-Supper* is alſo of ſpecial advantage to promote a lively and devout remembrance of Chriſt, and thereby to invigorate our holy and heavenly affections, and to aſſiſt our progreſs in all virtue and goodneſs. That the remembrance of Chriſt by thoſe that love him in ſincerity has naturally this good effect, will not be denied by any ſuch. Their love to Chriſt will be very much inflamed by conſidering the repreſentation of his; and their deſire of imitating the example of their Saviour, and ſtanding compleat in his whole will, by their love to him.——Another obvious recommendation of this Ordinance is the peculiar tendency it has to unite the hearts of Chriſtians in brotherly kindneſs and charity. *Cicero* taking notice of that endearment which was

found among perſons of the ſame family and kindred, gives this reaſon of it, *Magnum eſt enim habere eadem monumenta majorum, &c.* "It is no ſmall matter to have the ſame "monuments of our anceſtors, the ſame "ſacrifices and religious ceremonies, and "the ſame common ſepulchres." So here, and much more here than in the other caſe, to have the ſame Maſter, the ſame Redeemer, the ſame ſacred Symbols by which they declare their common zeal for this divine Perſon, their common intereſt in him, and their common relation one to another, what an incentive, what an aid muſt it be to Chriſtians to *dwell together in unity*, and mutually to ſtudy and promote each others welfare and happineſs!——And then the pleaſure which rewards the conſcientious obſervation of this command, as it carries its own recommendation in it, has this further advantage, that it ſtrengthens our reſolutions, animates our holy zeal, and renders the practice of all the other duties of Religion more delightful. Communicating in the *Lord's-Supper* being thus advantageous, the obligation to communicate muſt be anſwerable; for the greater the advantages, the greater the motive, and the greater the motive to any duty, the more inexcuſable muſt be the neglect of it.——Let this excite both non-communicants and communicants to reflect on their duty. Have I the proſpect if I receive worthily of ſo much honour and advan-

vantage accruing to me, and ſhall I not be perſuaded to come? Should the non-communicant ſay. Since it is my happineſs to partake of the memorials of Chriſt's body and blood, and of the pledges of his love, (ſhould the communicant ſay) my reſolution is to walk ſo as to pleaſe my Lord and Maſter, adorn his doctrine, and contribute in my little ſphere to make the world entertain better thoughts both of the Maſter and of his diſciples.

Such being the *reaſons* (to which others might be added) which evince the obligation lying upon the diſciples of Chriſt to communicate in the Sacrament of the Supper, ſo obvious and forcible, it may juſtly occaſion ſome ſurprize how it comes to paſs, that ſo great a part of the chriſtian world ſatisfy themſelves in the neglect of this Ordinance. I ſhall briefly examine the *reaſons* of this.

1. The moſt general and the leading reaſon ſeems to be a ſuperſtitious notion of the *Lord's-Supper*, which has too much prevailed in the Chriſtian Church, to the great detriment of it, and does ſtill prevail, though I hope not ſo much as it has done. God grant it may wear out more and more, and that men may return to a ſober judicious ſenſe of the nature and deſign of this, and every other part of our holy Religion! Many Chriſtians with regard to the *Lord's-Supper* ſeem to be in a condition like that of the

[l] *Iſraelites* at the giving of the Law, when they ſaw mount *Sinai* burning with fire, and covered with blackneſs and tempeſt; a ſight ſo terrible that *Moſes* ſaid, [m] *I exceedingly fear and quake; and heard the ſound of a trumpet and the voice of words, which voice they that heard intreated that the word ſhould not be ſpoken to them any more.* They could hardly be more afraid to approach the *mountain*, than ſome Chriſtians are to come to the *Lord's-Table*; as if bounds were ſet about it on purpoſe, as about mount *Sinai*, to keep off people, and they had the ſame order as the people then had, *not to break through to come up to the Lord, leſt he ſhould break forth upon them.* They could ſcarcely more dread the voice of thunder in which the Law was delivered, than thoſe timerous miſtaken Chriſtians do the command—*Do this in remembrance of me*—not conſidering that they *are come to mount Zion*, not to *mount Sinai*; *to Jeſus the Mediator of the new covenant*; [n] *through whom we have acceſs by one Spirit to the Father Almighty*; and ſurely then can have no juſt cauſe to fear approaching the Mediator himſelf, or rather the memorials of him at his *Table*. Our Mediator is not ſo terrible, as to make us ſtand in need of another Mediator in order to our coming before him with boldneſs; nay, *we are come to the blood of ſprinkling, which ſpeaketh better things* than the Law

[l] Exod. xix. 16. [m] Heb. xii. 18. [n] Eph. i. 18.

Law did, being a confirmation of all the promiſes of the Goſpel; and what then ſhould occaſion, or what can juſtify, ſuch dreadful apprehenſions of the *Lord's-Supper*, which may very well be called *ſuperſtitious*, as they are without all juſt ground, and have no other tendency than to enſlave and debilitate the minds of Chriſtians, to make them of a ſervile ſpirit, inſtead of inſpiring a *ſpirit of adoption*, and cheriſhing the love of God and of Jeſus, which is at once the nobleſt, and the moſt delightful part of practical Religion.

It is not unlikely that what chiefly gave riſe to and ſpread this wrong notion of the *Holy-Supper*, and made people advance it ſo much above the level of all other religious duties in reſpect of the *ſolemnity*, was the doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*, or the real corporeal preſence, *i. e.* the change of the elements of bread and wine into the very body and blood of Chriſt, to which they were taught to pay a religious worſhip; and to eat what they worſhiped had certainly ſomething more than *ſolemn*, even ſomething *horrible* in it. And that which increaſed the ſuperſtitious veneration for this Sacrament was, the denying the cup to the *Laity*; of this none but the Prieſts, the miniſters of the Lord, muſt have the privilege to partake. Thus the ſuperſtition may be ſuppoſed to have begun, and having taken poſ-

ſeſſion

ſeſſion of the minds of men, was not eaſily to be driven out again; not at the *Reformation* itſelf, when the doctrines of Popery were baniſhed out of Proteſtant Churches, but too much of the ſpirit retained, which was the conſequence of thoſe doctrines; and particularly this ſuperſtitious regard to the *Lord's-Supper*, which methinks Proteſtants ſhould be the more willing to part with, upon the account of its popiſh original.

The *Lord's-Supper* is without all doubt a moſt ſolemn Ordinance, and is it not a very ſolemn thing to draw nigh to God in any of the duties of divine worſhip? To God the greateſt, moſt glorious and adorable Being? The *ſolemnity* of this Sacrament principally depends upon that which is common to it with the ordinary parts of worſhip, *viz.* the addreſſes to God which accompany it, which carry ſomething more ſolemn in them than the *Lord's-Supper* itſelf does, conſidered merely as a feaſt of commemoration inſtituted in honour of the great Friend and Saviour of mankind. It is true this Ordinance has in it or attending it all that is ſolemn in other Ordinances, with ſomething additional, I mean the manner of approaching God through the ſacrifice of his Son, repreſented by the viſible memorials of it; but then this does not add ſo much to the *ſolemnity* of this religious action, as it does to the encouragement we have

have [o] *to come with boldneſs to the throne of the heavenly grace; having not only a great High-Prieſt paſſed into the heavens*, but alſo the memorials of that ſacrifice, by which he obtained the pardon of ſin, acceptance with God, and eternal redemption for us. So that here is no room at all for a ſuperſtitious fear; nor is the *ſolemnity* of this Ordinance any more than that of the other duties of Religion, a reaſon why we ſhould baniſh ourſelves from it.

2. There are thoſe who will ſay, they do not refuſe, but only delay to come to the *Lord's-Table*. As there is no particular time of life fixed when they are firſt to receive the *Holy Communion*, they continue putting it off from time to time, and only wait for a more convenient opportunity of doing it. But when will that more convenient opportunity come? As to many, does not this excuſe, poor as it is, ſerve them for years together? It is true, no exact time is limited, when our obligation to receive the *Lord's-Supper* begins to take place; but what then, if the nature of the command be ſuch as to explain itſelf in this reſpect, as it certainly does; ſince the obligation to obſerve any command muſt commence as ſoon as perſons have an ability, and can be made rationally ſenſible of the nature of the duty, and the advantages attending it; and that is when they are arrived to years of maturity, ſo as to be capable of ſerious conſideration, of acting ſteadily

[o] Heb. iv. 16.

ſteadily in Religion, and of ſerving God and celebrating the memory of their Saviour with underſtanding; and therefore I could wiſh that *younger perſons* would take this matter into their deliberate thoughts, and do now earneſtly intreat them for their Saviour's ſake, (of their obligations to whom I hope they are in ſome degree ſenſible) and for their own to do it. I ſuppoſe them to be of age to judge and act for themſelves, not only to diſcern good and evil, but to apprehend the great Doctrines of Chriſtianity, particularly that of *Chriſt being the Saviour of ſinners, and only Mediator between God and man*, in memory of whom, and with a deſign more effectually to ingage his diſciples to love, imitate, and obey him, the Sacrament of the Supper was inſtituted; and what then ſhould forbid their being received to, and receiving the *Holy Communion*, being before competently inſtructed in the nature and deſign of it, which I likewiſe ſuppoſe?

Of the three great yearly Feſtivals that were obſerved among the *Jews* by divine appointment, the *Paſſover* correſponds very nearly to the *Lord's-Supper* under the chriſtian diſpenſation. The age when they made their *firſt* appearance at the celebration of this Ordnance, the *Jewiſh* writers tell us was at furtheſt when they were *twelve* or *thirteen* years old; which is rendered the more probable by

by what the [p] *Evangeliſt* relates concerning our Saviour, that *his Parents went to Jeruſalem every year at the feaſt of the Paſſover; and when he was twelve years old they carried him up with them, after the manner of the feaſt.* Certainly as the work of our redemption by Jeſus Chriſt is of a more ſignal nature, and much greater importance than any of thoſe temporal deliverances and favours, which God vouchſafed to the *Jewiſh* church and nation, and for that reaſon deſerves to be had in everlaſting remembrance, ſo the way of commemorating it in the *Lord's-Supper*, with the intention of this Ordinance to promote a ſpirit of piety, and the practice of all goodneſs in the communicants, are things which *young perſons* grown up to years of diſcretion with a little reflection may eaſily underſtand. And why then do not Parents put thoſe of their children who are ſoberly inclined upon coming to the *Lord's-Table* ſooner than is uſual? I need not ſay I am now ſpeaking of ſuch Parents as communicate themſelves, for from others it cannot be expected. Why ſhould not *young perſons*, who have ſuch a ſufficient ripeneſs of judgment, and ſobriety of behaviour, be perſuaded to reflect and perform their duty in this reſpect? They will ſoon find the advantage and pleaſure of it in a greater compoſure of their paſſions, a more exact regularity

[p] Luke ii. 41, 42.

larity in their converſation, a better diſpoſition of mind for the performance of other duties, and more thought and prudence and ſucceſs, by the bleſſing of God, in the management of their common affairs.

I ſhould be better pleaſed to ſee more *young perſons* coming to the *Lord's-Table*, as they would hereby be good examples to *older perſons*, who are now only bad examples to them, and might perhaps make them aſhamed of their delays; for undoubtedly whatever may be ſaid in excuſe of *younger perſons* when they deſire longer time, ſuch who are almoſt come to the middle part of life, or paſt it, it may be in the decline of it, can have nothing to plead for themſelves; they cannot pretend that they are not of age ſufficient for the thing to which they are preſſed, nor with any grace talk of delaying yet longer who have delayed much too long already. For God's ſake therefore, and as they regard their duty to their Lord and Redeemer, and the proſperity of their own ſouls, let them not thus egregiouſly impoſe upon themſelves any longer. One would imagine that it was ſomething exceeding grievous and burthenſome, that they were exhorted to perform, that they are thus continually putting it off, when it is to do nothing elſe but what their own ſenſe of duty, and a principle of ingenuity, gratitude, and ſelf-intereſt ſhould not ſuffer them to be eaſy in omitting, though they

they were never preſſed to it. How long do they intend to go on thus? Till death overtakes them while they are thus delaying, cuts off their trifling purpoſes, and ſo they appear before their Saviour and great Judge, without having once ſhown forth his death according to his moſt expreſs command?

3. The plea of great numbers is, that they are not fit to partake of this *Holy Supper*. Why ſo? Are they ſcandalous ſinners? Do they live in a conſtant known violation of the precepts of the Goſpel? If this be the caſe, I will allow that they are not qualified to approach the *Lord's-Table*; and that no man can receive *worthily* who lives in *habitual* wickedneſs, both before and after, and ſo goes on alternately attending upon his devotions and his vices. We will ſuppoſe a notorious habitual ſinner to receive the Sacrament, nay, and that he ſincerely intends the action in honour of Chriſt as his Lord and Maſter, and purpoſes future amendment at the time of performing it, yet ſo far is ſuch a purpoſe as this from making a man a *worthy receiver*, (as things appear to me) that one of this character cannot *pray worthily*; for how can thoſe deſires and reſolutions be in any proper ſenſe worthy of or ſuitable to the duty performed, which are ſo imperfect as to be without effect, not now and then only, but always? And though a man had better pray with

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ſuch feeble deſires than not at all, it will not follow that he had better come to the Sacrament too, than delay it till he has given ſome ſigns of his repentance in his life and converſation. Prayer is a *natural* and *univerſal* means of piety and virtue, in the total neglect of which it is impoſſible a man ſhould be *actually* good, and the next to impoſſible that he ſhould be in the way to become ſo; which cannot be ſaid of the *Lord's-Supper*, this being a Poſitive Inſtitution.

Hath a man been guilty of drunkenneſs, murder, adultery, or any other the moſt flagitious crimes? He cannot do better than immediately caſt himſelf down in the preſence of God, confeſſing his ſin, humbling himſelf for it, imploring mercy and the like; but ſurely no one would think it right to go from the commiſſion of ſuch crimes to the *Lord's-Table*. Not to ſpeak of *ſecret* or *family* prayer, there is not that *ſcandal* to the chriſtian ſociety in admitting notorious ſinners to mingle in the publick prayers of the church, as in permitting, not to ſay inviting them, to come to the *Lord's-Supper:* eating and drinking are directly and particularly the acts of every communicant, acts diſtinguiſhing of the chriſtian ſociety, and a mark of friendſhip between the Maſter and his diſciples; in all which reſpects this duty differs from prayer, which in its very nature ſuits

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the condition of a ſinner, and in which therefore he may be allowed to join without offence, if he behave decently during the worſhip; and therefore upon the whole, I think ſuch perſons are in the right to ſtay away from the *Lord's-Supper*, till they are better diſpoſed to make a proper uſe of it, and have given ſome proof of this diſpoſition to themſelves and others. But then a vicious life, for which no excuſe is to be given in any man, and leaſt of all in a Chriſtian, can be no excuſe for the omiſſion of a plain duty; an omiſſion which inſtead of having its guilt extenuated by this plea, is a very great aggravation of the guilt of a wicked life, which is the occaſion of it. They ſhould rather therefore argue thus—" I at " preſent lead ſuch a life as I can neither re- " concile with the rules of the Chriſtian Reli- " gion, nor with a reaſonable hope of an " intereſt in the promiſes and bleſſings of " it, I will therefore immediately quit the " guilty, the dangerous way I am in; and " then as I ſhall be prepared for death, " which I have now the greateſt reaſon to " dread the thoughts of, eſpecially conſider- " ing that there is not a moment when it " may not ſurprize me, ſo I ſhall be quali- " fied to ſhew my gratitude to my Saviour " by joining with his diſciples in the com- " memoration of his death and ſufferings, " and the participation of all the fruits and

"benefits of them."—So much for those whose character is known to be *vicious* by themselves and others.

Shall we therefore encourage none to come but those who are assured of their being in a state of favour with God, sanctified and pardoned; or who have very good reason to think so, and are troubled with very few doubts about it? This, I take it, would be an extreme on the other hand. If persons live so as not to discredit their christian profession, if they have good dispositions which they in some measure cultivate and improve, though it should be doubtful whether they are prevailing, I cannot see that they have a sufficient cause for absenting themselves from the Sacrament, which might be of admirable service to fortify their holy resolutions, and to invigorate their pious affections, particularly their love to Christ, which they are conscious to their having in some degree, as likewise of its not being without all effect; and though it should really be so that they are not thorough converts, and the love of God and of Jesus has not yet gotten the entire mastery over their other passions, yet I can by no means think that those words of the Apostle *Paul* do at all belong to them, that [a] *he who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body:* besides observing that

[a] 1 Cor. xi. 29.

that the original word tranſlated *damnation* might and ought to have been rendered by *judgment*, meaning ſome *temporal* judgment, which is a much ſofter one, it is enough to ſhow that ſuch as I am ſpeaking of do not fall under the weight of St. *Paul*'s cenſure, foraſmuch as they *diſcern the Lord's body*, putting a very great difference betwixt that and their common meals, and having a very ſincere deſire to honour their Saviour, and to be in favour with him, which they teſtify, by bringing forth many, if not all the fruits of righteouſneſs in ſome degree, tho' not in ſo great a degree as they ſhould.

And the more fully to remove all doubt in this matter, I ſhall briefly conſider the irregularity of the *Corinthians* noted by St. *Paul*. [r] *When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's-Supper; for in eating every one taketh before other his own ſupper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken.* The queſtion here is, whether this relates to the *Lord's-Supper* itſelf, or to the *Agapæ*, i. e. the *Love-feaſts*, which uſed to accompany it in the primitive times, or to ſome other entertainment, which of their own fancy theſe irregular *Corinthians* held before they proceeded to partake of the Sacrament. One can hardly conceive, that it was at the *Lord's-Supper* itſelf they behaved in this indecent manner, ſince they could not but

[r] 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21.

know, that all belonging to that was only *bread* and *wine*, whereas here ſome of them ſeemed to have *eaten* as well as *drunk* to exceſs; why elſe is it ſaid, *one is hungry, another is drunken*, if the term *drunken* was not deſigned to comprehend exceſſes of both kinds in *eating* as well as *drinking*? And then again the *Lord's-Supper* being a feaſt of which all in common were to partake in memory of their Saviour, it is not very credible that ſome would not only take this Supper before others, but without any care that the *poor* ſhould have wherewithal to keep the feaſt. As to the *Agapæ*, or *Love-feaſts*, it is moſt probable from * *Antiquity*, that they were not celebrated till after the *Lord's-Supper*; and being feaſts of charity, the very nature of them will not admit of our ſuppoſing that the *poor* were excluded from them. The moſt likely way of ſolving the difficulty ſeems to me to be this, that the *Corinthians* of their own heads made the *Lord's-Supper* an *appendix* or ſecond entertainment to another feaſt, in order to conform it to the manner of communicating at the firſt Inſtitution, which was at the cloſe of the *Paſſover*. † *Socrates*, in his eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, mentions ſome *Egyptians* living near *Alexandria*, who partook of the Sacrament in a different manner from what was uſual in

* See Plin. l. 10. ep. 97. and Tertul. Apol. c. 39.
† Lib. 5. c. 22.

in the Chriſtian Church, making merry, and filling themſelves with all ſorts of food, and then in the evening, after this, partaking of the Sacrament, which he calls *myſteries*. This looks ſo much like a parallel inſtance, that we may very well ſuppoſe the practice of the *Corinthians* condemned by St. *Paul* to have been the ſame with that of theſe *Egyptians*. And the Apoſtle might very well ſay, *that this was not to eat the Lord's-Supper*; for the ultimate deſign of their meeting together being to partake of the *Lord's-Supper*, to which the other feaſt was only introductory, as it ſhowed no great reſpect for the *Lord's-Supper*, or knowledge of the nature of it, to behave ſo at the feaſt connected with it, ſo by the exceſſes they were guilty of (aggravated by their uncommunicativeneſs to the *poor* members of the church) they put themſelves into a condition, in which they could not poſſibly *diſcern* as they ought the *Lord's body*; this was *eating and drinking unworthily* in the moſt notorious manner. But what has this to do with their caſe, or how can they be affected by the Apoſtle's cenſure, who come in a ſober and reverent manner, and with a ſincere deſire and purpoſe to walk worthy of this Sacrament, and of all the other parts of the Chriſtian Religion; tho' it may be they are not ſo perfect in their conformity to the Goſpel, and ſo thoroughly confirmed in their good reſolutions

and dispositions as they should be, and perhaps are in a way to become? And therefore the objection of *unfitness* is easily and sufficiently answered.

I would conclude this head with this reflection, that communicants of a sober and regular behaviour, may, by what has been now offered, be more fully satisfied in what they have done in coming to the *Lord's-Table*, so as to be freed from any scruples they may have been troubled with upon this account; and not only so, but may rejoice in their having chosen this good part, for so doubtless it is. "Instead of giving way to a *spirit* "*of bondage again to fear*, think, O my soul, "of the duty which thou hast before thee, "and in the omission of which thou didst "wisely resolve not to allow thyself, and "of the advantages annexed to the con- "scientious discharge of it; and with equal "diligence and chearfulness, joined with "earnest prayer to God for his assistance, "apply thy mind and heart to the devout "commemoration of thy once dying and "dead, but now risen, exalted, ever living and "affectionate Lord!"

4. Others urge their being involved in so much business, as not to be able to spend the time necessary by way of *Preparation* for the Sacrament. But the question is, whether the multiplicity of their business be what they cannot well avoid? If it be their own

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fault that their time is ſo much taken up with the world, inſtead of making their worldly cares a pretence for their abſenting themſelves from the *Lord's-Table*, they ſhould immediately ſet themſelves to retrench theſe cares, and thereby cut of this occaſion of their neglecting a plain duty of Religion; and ſo without all doubt they would, if it was really their deſire to have all hindrances removed out of their way, in order to their partaking of this Goſpel feaſt. If their being ingaged in a great deal of buſineſs is not the effect of choice, but neceſſity, and they would willingly, if they could, ſhake of this and every other incumbrance, they have no manner of reaſon to baniſh themſelves from any Ordinance of the Goſpel upon this account. Becauſe their hands are full of the world on the *week-day*, they do not therefore, when the *Lord's-Day* returns, refuſe to join in the ſtated duties of it; and why ſhould they deprive themſelves of the privilege of communicating in the *Lord's-Supper*, any more than of performing the other parts of divine worſhip; or think themſelves unqualified for one, any more than for the other? It is to be hoped, whenever they come to the houſe of God, and unite in prayers to God or in hearing his moſt holy word, they labour to diſcharge their hearts of every foreign care, that [f] *they*

[f] 1 Cor. vii. 35.

may attend upon the Lord without diſtraction; and having laid aſide the thoughts of all earthly things, they might as well receive the *Lord's-Supper*, as ingage in any other religious duty, if there be nothing elſe to prevent it, but their being taken up more than they deſire with the affairs of this life at other times. But by this means they are not able to devote the requiſite time to the duties of *Preparation*. To which it may be replied, that what we call *Preparation* for the Sacrament being only a *prudential* thing, no were enjoined in the word of God, muſt not be looked upon as *abſolutely neceſſary*, much leſs the ſpending ſuch an exact portion of time in the exerciſes of devotion. Let us imploy what time we can command, and find by experience to be of uſe to this purpoſe, and we have nothing further to trouble ourſelves about, but putting our hearts in the beſt order we can, and ſo moderating our affections to all theſe ſublunary things, that as often as we are called to any duty, we may be in a proper diſpoſition for the performance of it; let us do this, and we need not doubt of our being acceptable gueſts at the *Table* of the Lord.

5. The laſt hindrance I ſhall mention to men's coming to the *Table* of the Lord, and which I fear is the moſt common, is that perſons apprehend, that the Sacrament will oblige them to greater ſtrictneſs of converſation

tion than they ſhould otherwiſe be bound to obſerve, or ſhall be able to make good, and by that means increaſe their guilt, and that therefore they had better for their own ſafety continue to abſent themſelves. But let me take the liberty to tell them, that this is ſuch a ſort of reaſon, as they would not ſatisfy themſelves with in any other caſe where their affections were ingaged. Do not they know that whatever bleſſings they enjoy, temporal or ſpiritual, their obligation to ſerve and glorify God is thereby rendered the greater? Are they not under ſtronger obligations to a holy life for being *Chriſtians*, than if they were *Heathens*; *Proteſtants*, than if they had been trained up in the darkneſs of *Popery?* But if it was in their choice, would they therefore change conditions with *Papiſts* or *Heathens?* Surely no; becauſe they know, though perhaps they do not conſider it as they ſhould, that their advantages are far beyond thoſe of the other, and cannot be ſufficiently prized. Do they not likewiſe know, that any ſuperior degree of learning, or riches, or power, is a talent for which they are accountable to the Governor and Judge of the world, and which calls for higher degrees of gratitude to God, and as the conſequence of that, of activity and diligence in his ſervice; ſo that if poſſeſſing ſo much greater abilities than others, they yet do not more good than they, or not ſo much

much, they will be left inexcuſable? But notwithſtanding this, do they chuſe to be ignorant, and poor, and diſregarded, that they may have the leſs account to give at laſt? It is certain from univerſal experience that they do not, and why then ſhould the preſent be the only excepted caſe, in which they deny themſelves a moſt invaluable privilege, only that they may not be ſo ſtrongly obliged to a regular and chriſtian converſation? To ſuch a converſation they are obliged by their profeſſion of Chriſtianity, whether they are communicants or no, to an obſervation of the ſelf-ſame duties and virtues, and an abſtinence from the ſame vices, as they value the favour of their God and their Saviour, and their own everlaſting happineſs; and let me add, are under the greater obligations to it, for having the opportunities of coming to the *Lord's-Table*, whether they make uſe of theſe opportunities or not.

It is not only *actually* receiving the *Lord's-Supper*, but their being *commanded*, *invited*, and *incouraged* to receive it, that they are to give an account of; nor is their privilege the leſs, nor conſequently their obligation to be thankful for it, becauſe they neglect to make any advantage of it; on the contrary, ſo much the greater is their guilt and their folly. They are obliged to practiſe nothing after the Sacrament, but what they were before obliged to, if they would

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enter into the kingdom of heaven; and to abſtain from no indulgences but thoſe which by the Goſpel-conſtitution will exclude us from thence; their fancy therefore of ſecuring to themſelves a greater liberty by abſenting from the *Lord's-Table* is very fooliſh: they are ſtill talking of the danger of partaking of the *Lord's-Supper*, and not walking worthy of it, in the mean while forgeting that a ſinful life will be their ruin, though they never communicate, and that there is a danger as great, or rather greater on the other ſide, I mean in habitually neglecting a plain Inſtitution of the Goſpel. To which let us further add, that if our obligation to walk circumſpectly is greater after we have received the Sacrament, our helps, and encouragements, and pleaſures are greater too; and that therefore upon the whole, we can have no good reaſon, upon any ſuch account as this, to refuſe another invitation to the *Lord's-Table*, which I now give you in the name of my great Maſter and yours.

To conclude—The Inſtitution of the *Supper*, and the peculiar nature and deſign of it, have been explained; the obligations lying on the diſciples of Chriſt to communicate in this Sacrament ſhewn; and the moſt plauſible objections againſt it anſwered; and I would fain hope, that all this will not be without ſome good effect, both with regard

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to the judgment and the affections of my Reader; helping to give him a diſtincter notion of this part of his Religion, the wiſdom and the deſign of the Inſtitution, to convince him, that it is equally his duty and his advantage to obſerve it, and to produce in him, in concurrence with his own ſerious conſideration, and the Grace of God, all thoſe good diſpoſitions, which the remembrance of Chriſt requires, and is ſo well fitted to ſtrengthen and perfect.

Whatever defects there have been in the manner of handling this Subject, yet I will take the liberty to ſay, it muſt be the Reader's own fault, if he is nothing at all the better for what has been laid before him. Enough I am perſuaded has been offered to gain the aſſent of any impartial perſon, and if ſeriouſly conſidered, to prevail with all to devote themſelves to God and to the Redeemer, to love them more fervently, and to ſerve them more diligently and faithfully. God grant our communions may be more numerous, and communicants more eminent and exemplary for every chriſtian virtue! The *Lord's-Supper* is undoubtedly a moſt excellent Inſtitution, and were it but improved as it ought, would appear to be ſo to the conviction of the whole world. Would to God that all thoſe, who, in obedience to the command of their Maſter, eat and drink at his *Table* in remembrance of him, would duely

duely conſider this, taking care to behave at all times ſuitably to the dignity of their character, the ſolemn nature of their vows and ingagements, and the greatneſs of their obligations; then would others, *ſeeing their good works glorify their Father who is in heaven*, and not be eaſy till they had joined with them in celebrating the memory of our common Lord and Saviour, ſaying, "Come and let us alſo go to this feaſt, and "at once honour Chriſt, and promote, as "they have done, our edification in holi-"neſs and comfort"—then would the Church of Chriſt be more glorious and beautiful, and his Religion a ſource of more abounding and more permanent pleaſure and ſatisfaction; then, in a word, as the excellence and uſefulneſs of all the Commandments and Inſtitutions of the Goſpel would be evident, ſo particularly of the *Lord's-Supper*, for which we ſhould eſteem ourſelves obliged to praiſe God, as in it we do for his wonderful goodneſs to the children of men.

DEVOTIONAL

EXERCISES,

Relating to the

Lord's-Supper.

1738.

TO THE READER.

THE Author's design in this little Present which he makes the Publick, is not to confine and fetter the devotion of pious communicants, but assist it, by furnishing them with materials for meditation, which they may have always at hand, to make use of when and in what manner they judge convenient. Souls the best turned for the exercises of the spiritual life, have not at all times the same happy flow of thought, or liveliness of affection; and when this is the case, that their usual activity fails them, who can tell but they may find something or other here which may help to rouse their attention, to lead them into a train of thinking, and so fan the sacred fire, that it may burn the more brightly. And if this may be supposed of these superior souls, much more of those in lower classes. As devotion, true, enlightened devotion, is one of the most sublime, and withal, most delightful and useful attainments of the human mind, being not only a very great support and refreshment to it, a sort of heavenly musick in the house of its pilgrimage, but a considerable help to the most animated practice of all virtue

and goodneſs, I ſhall eſteem myſelf not a little happy to contribute in any degree to the ſpreading, or the exerciſe and improvement, of ſo excellent a diſpoſition; I have ſincerely attempted it, and have nothing further I can do, but to commend what follows to the bleſſing of God, and the Reader's candid and ſerious peruſal.

Farewel,

H. G.

DEVOTIONAL

EXERCISES,

Relating to the

LORD's-SUPPER,

Before, or Preparatory to Receiving.

SECT. I.

NOW, O my soul, that thou art retired from the world, let me ask thee, as in the presence of the all-knowing God, hast thou ever seriously considered thy nature, thy interest, and thy dangers? That thou art a spiritual Being, reasonable and immortal, capable of other and nobler pleasures than thou receivest from the injoyments of the world, and by the instrumentality of the body; of a higher and more permanent felicity than falls within the limits of this transitory life; and that without a great deal of thought and care, thou art liable to be excluded from all

title to this, which is thy proper portion, and at the same time deprived of all those inferior good things, which thou art too apt to mistake for it, and to place in the room of it; instead of attaining happiness, the thing thou art seeking after, to fall into a state of misery, from which there is no hope of rising again? Hast thou considered, O my soul, what the Son of God hath done to awaken thee out of the common lethargy, to cure thee of thy blindness, to purchase happiness for thee, and to direct, assist, and animate thee in the pursuit of it? Acknowledge, O my soul, the infinite obligations, under God the first mover, to the Redeemer of mankind, the great lover of souls, who, to ransom them from the evils they suffered, or were exposed to, and to raise them to the highest degrees of perfection and blessedness their nature and faculties would admit of, came down from the bosom of the Father into this sinful world, cloathed himself with human flesh, and human infirmities, taught the most excellent doctrine, enforced it by the most perfect example, and the most precious and divine promises, and freely seals it with his own blood, which we are taught to regard not only as the blood of a *Martyr*, but an *Atoning Sacrifice*; who established a church, or society of faithful persons, and took care that nothing should be wanting for its preservation in the world, and

and continual edification in faith, and holineſs, and charity, and conſolation! And canſt thou deny any thing to ſuch a friend, ſuch a benefactor as Jeſus hath been to thee? When he hath provided thee with all the means and aſſiſtances thou needeſt, in order to thy going on to perfection, among others with the Inſtitution of the *Holy-Supper*, ſhouldeſt thou not thankfully accept, and faithfully improve them? O my ſoul, reſolve, and let nothing turn thee from thy purpoſe, that the ſerving and imitating thy Saviour, and preparing thyſelf for that bleſſed immortality which he hath procured for, and revealed and promiſed to thee, ſhall be thy chief aim, thy conſtant imployment, during the reſt of thy pilgrimage upon earth!

SECT. II.

BUT what is it, O my ſoul, that thy Saviour requires of thee? I hear him ſaying—*Do this in remembrance of me*—But what is it that he would have us do? Is it to make ourſelves of no reputation and become poor for his ſake, as he did for ours; to renounce every thing that this life hath in it moſt valuable and pleaſant; to afflict the body with painful and uſeleſs auſterities; and to retreat from all the affairs and converſation of the world into barren deſarts, and

frightful ſolitudes? No ſuch thing; tho' had he bid thee give him ſome ſuch ſevere proofs of thy remembrance of him as theſe, thou couldeſt not in gratitude have refuſed them; how much more when he only enjoins thee in a religious manner, to make uſe of bread and wine as ſacramental memorials of his body broken, and his blood ſhed for us. How eaſy the command! And how inexcuſable thoſe who, calling themſelves the diſciples of Chriſt, will not through ſome fault of their own, be perſuaded to do as they are commanded, or do it negligently and indevoutly! Haſt thou never heard and admired at the cruelties which the worſhipers of falſe Gods, not only voluntarily but with a ſort of pride, have practiſed upon themſelves, in honour of dumb idols? Thy merciful Lord calls for no ſuch teſt of thy love to him; he makes this indeed a neceſſary qualification for thy being his diſciple, as it is in the nature of the thing, that thou keep his commandments, but either thou knoweſt not what his commandments are, or muſt be obliged to own that they are not grievous. That I love my fellow-diſciples, and cultivate a benevolent diſpoſition towards all mankind; that I be humble, meek, merciful, temperate; that I be not anxiouſly thoughtful about future time and events; lay not up for myſelf a treaſure on earth but in heaven; that my treaſure being there, my heart may be there alſo; theſe,

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and ſuch like, are the commands of the bleſſed Jeſus, who, as a means admirably adapted to my delightful progreſs in theſe and all other virtues of the chriſtian life, does further enjoin a devout attendance at his *Table*, there to receive the pledges of his love, and grace to help in every time of need.

SECT. III.

MUST thou not acknowledge, O my ſoul, that thy Redeemer's yoke is eaſy, and his burthen light, if thou reflect that inſtead of thoſe numerous rites and ceremonies which the Moſaic Law appointed, and which rendered that ſervice ſo burthenſome, that an Apoſtle of Chriſt ſcruples not to call it *a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear*, the Chriſtian Church hath no other obſervances of a ritual nature but thoſe two ſimple and eaſy ones (eaſy to be underſtood, and as eaſy to be practiſed) of *Baptiſm*, and the *Lord's-Supper*; and that of theſe two the latter is only intended to be repeated? So little does our divine Maſter delight in abridging his followers of any liberty they can reaſonably deſire, and ſo much is he concerned that their duty ſhould be their pleaſure, or a natural ſource of it. The things recommended and moſt ſtrongly inſiſted on by his Goſpel, are thoſe weightier

matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and the love of God, things intrinsically good, and amiable: and to the honour of this Sacrament of the Supper it may be observed, that tho' a *Positive Institution*, yet, to those who receive it in a right manner, it is of unspeakable use to promote the life of God in the soul, and the practice of all those virtues by which we resemble God in the conversation. Wherefore, O my soul, instead of being influenced by any objections of weak, or ill-designing men, against the Institution itself, or any trifling excuses that may tempt thee to neglect the observation of it, or vain terrors which would rob thee of the pleasure it was designed to afford thee, with all readiness obey the invitation to this sacred feast, and with all gladness of heart set thyself to celebrate the love of thy Saviour in it!

SECT. IV.

NOR ask, why Christ would have us eat and drink in memory of him, when we could remember him without any such ceremony? Confess, O my soul, obliged as thou art, to have thy Saviour perpetually in mind! Hast thou not found it too easy and common a thing for thee to forget him, to lose thyself and the thoughts of an absent Saviour

Saviour amidſt the cares, or amuſements and delights of this vain world? It is not what thou ſhouldeſt do is the queſtion; thou ſhouldeſt there is no doubt be ever looking unto Jeſus, and embrace every opportunity of converſing with him in thy thoughts and meditations, without any other monitor, or prompter, than a grateful heart; this thou ſhouldeſt do, but is it thus thou wouldeſt act, if left entirely to thy own diſcretion and choice?

Record this, O my Soul, among the inſtances of the kind and tender care of thy Redeemer, that he calls thee off from the purſuit of the world; hath made it thy duty to diſmiſs thy meaner paſſions, and, in the abſence of theſe, to commemorate him in this ſolemn manner; and by theſe external ſigns, that thou mighteſt have thy thoughts of him better fixed, and thy affections more powerfully actuated and enlivened, and by this means be diſpoſed more naturally to remember him at other times, and in the ordinary courſe of thy life! From this ſacramental tranſaction, frequently and rightly performed, will proceed ſuch a ſtrong attachment to thy Saviour, ſuch a prevailing bent in thy inclinations, as will make it next to impoſſible for thee to live in an habitual forgetfulneſs of that Jeſus, whoſe dying love, with unfeigned zeal and gratitude, thou haſt ſo often ſhewed forth in his Supper; he will

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dwell in thy heart by faith, have the poſſeſſion of all thy faculties, be precious in thy eſteem, and dear to thy memory. And then further, attend to this, as a conſideration of no ſmall weight, that the remembrance of Chriſt in the *Holy Communion*, is not a private and ſolitary act, but of a publick nature, a declaration of the faith of the Chriſtian Church, and of the high veneration it hath for a crucified Saviour, and ſo is better fitted to do honour to his memory, and as an everlaſting monument to ſpread and perpetuate it in the world. And ſurely, O my ſoul, this muſt be a very great recommendation of this Ordinance to thee, and to all the faithful in Chriſt, that by publickly and conſtantly attending upon it, every one of you in ſome degree helps to ſupport the memory of your great Redeemer among men? Would not every one that remembers Chriſt himſelf, have others to remember him too? Would he not have his love dwell in the hearts, and his name upon the tongues of all men? And the little he can do to this end, muſt he not do, and be exceeding glad if he could do more?

SECT.

SECT. V.

THINK again, O my ſoul, with what view our gracious Redeemer obliges us to remember him! He had ſome deſign in demanding this of his followers, eſpecially in appointing ſuch a form of commemoration. Did this deſign regard himſelf, or us? Was it for his own ſake, or for ours, that he appears ſo deſirous of living in our remembrance? For the honour that will redound to him, or the benefit and conſolation that we ſhall receive from hence? For our ſakes, no doubt, was this intended; not properly for his own, who can gain nothing by us, and hath a dignity and greatneſs inherent in him, that exalts him far above all the motives of vain glory. How trifling and contemptible is the honour of having his name recorded by us the offſpring of the duſt, and tranſmitted down from one generation of ſhort-lived creatures to another, when the angels, thoſe ſons of light, ſurround him with their adoring multitudes, and make his praiſes the ſubject of their immortal ſongs! But this is the honour he covets, the joy for which he endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, to bring many ſons unto glory, to reſtore as great numbers as he can out of the ruins of the fallen race, to train them up in the paths of virtue and holineſs, and then

then the proper time for it being come, to bestow immortality upon them. For this end he calls upon thee to remember him; it is thy advantage he proposes; and great, unspeakably great, is the privilege accruing from this duty, if thou knowest how to improve it: and to thy improvement of it nothing more is necessary than sincerity on thy part, inasmuch as God will never fail to assist all those with the quickening influences of his Grace and Spirit, who do their best, and will accept their weak, because well-meant, endeavours to please him, through the mediation of his well-beloved Son, whose meritorious death and passion is represented to them, and remembered by them in this Ordinance.

SECT. VI.

BE this then, O my soul, thy great, thy only concern, to be approved of thy God and Saviour, to come with enlightened views, with fervent desires, and holy dispositions, and to be found a worthy, that thou mayest be a welcome guest! For thou canst not think, O my soul, that it is alike indifferent with what temper thou makest thy approaches to this sacred festival! Does the pious *Psalmist*, even under the legal dispensation, when there was so much outward pomp

pomp and ceremony in the worſhip of God, lay ſuch ſtreſs on inward purity, and moral goodneſs and rectitude? Does he beg of God to examine and prove him, to try his reins and his heart, and make his appeal to him, as having walked in his integrity, and had his loving kindneſs before his eyes, and then reſolve, *I will waſh my hands in innocence, ſo will I compaſs thine altar, O Lord*; and is leſs regard had to the qualification of the worſhiper, where the worſhip is more refined and ſpiritual? Was it a more ſolemn thing to attend the ſacrifice of a ſlain beaſt, than it is to commemorate the ſacrifice of the Son of God? But how ſhall I, who am but ſinful duſt and aſhes, come before the Lord? How preſent myſelf among the adorers of the moſt high God? He hath ſhewed thee, O my ſoul, what he requires of thee! Examine thyſelf, both as to thy notions of the duty before thee, the nature and the deſign of it, and as to thy fitneſs to partake of ſo high a privilege. Lay the foundation of faithfulneſs to God and man, to thy Maſter, and to thy fellow-diſciples, in being faithful and true to thyſelf; diligently ſearch thy memory, and ſee what the general courſe of thy life hath been, and whether there are not ſome particular great tranſgreſſions for which thou haſt not yet been ſo thoroughly humbled as thou ſhouldeſt; deſcend into thy heart, and

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if there be any favourite luſt, any unmortified habit of vice that lurks there, deſiſt not from thy enquiries till thou haſt found it; and, having found it, drag it into the light, ſhame thyſelf for it, and ſpare it not; for, alas, what will it avail thee to deceive thyſelf, when God is not mocked? The deluſion may pleaſe and flatter, and, while it laſts, fill thee with towering imaginations, confident hopes, and ſtrange overflowings of joy, eſpecially at the *Holy-Table*, from a falſe apprehenſion that all the benefits enjoyed by the true diſciples of Jeſus are thine. But how ſhort-lived muſt the peace, the pleaſure, the hope be, which is all fallacious and groundleſs! Thy pleaſures will only reſemble flaſhes of lightening in a dark night, which cauſe a momentary brightneſs, but preſently vaniſhing, give additional horrors to the remaining darkneſs. Haſt thou, after fairly and fully debating it, already ſettled this grand point? Take the comfort of thy ſincerity, and doubt not of a free and kind admiſſion by the Maſter of the feaſt to his *Table*. However, do not therefore immediately conclude all further examination and preparation needleſs. Haſt thou not been too indulgent in ſome things? Too deficient in others? Has not ſome bad temper grown upon thee? Some paſſion broke its bounds? A ſpirit of pride or ſenſuality, or worldlineſs, or indifference to the welfare and

and happineſs of others, tho' it does not reign in thee, yet recovered too much power? Humbly and earneſtly entreat forgiveneſs for it, and ſtrength againſt it; beg of God, the Father of ſpirits, to reſtore thee from thy wanderings; put all things into the beſt order thou art able thyſelf, and ſtedfaſtly reſolve not to allow thyſelf in any temper or degree of any temper, in any action or omiſſion of any action, which the Goſpel does not allow thee in.

SECT. VII.

LET me conſider, O my ſoul, this is but one among many religious duties which I am to perform with the ſame ſeriouſneſs and ſincerity I do this! Whenever I worſhip God, whether in publick or private, as I hope to do it acceptably, I am to cleanſe my hands before I draw nigh unto him, and to diſcharge my heart of every foreign care, that ſo I may be able to attend upon God without diſtraction, and have my mind poſſeſſed with a holy awe of the divine Majeſty. Let me not ſet one duty above another, nor by the preparation I make for the *Lord's-Supper*, be tempted to think I may be more careleſs and negligent in the ordinary exerciſes of Religion. The preparation of the heart is always neceſſary, when we take upon us to ſpeak to the great Lord of heaven and earth; and

and if by way of introduction to any particular Ordinance, as this of the *Lord's-Supper*, it be usual to spend more time in self-recollection, and other exercises of devout retirement, to the intent we may have our hearts set in order, and all things in a readiness against the approaching season; the foundation of this practice seems to be, that it is proper to do this sometimes, and no time is reckoned more proper for such a work, than before receiving the *Lord's-Supper*, as that Ordinance is not wont to revolve so often as the stated worship of the *Lord's-Day*, and the nature of the Institution is more entirely and distinguishingly evangelical, or christian: upon this account, as I shall not make it an indispensible rule to have the very same set preparation every time I receive the Sacrament, whether necessary or not necessary, convenient or not convenient; nor banish myself from the *Lord's-Table* when I have not an opportunity for it, (since this would be to bind myself where God hath left me free) so, as often, and as far, as I find it expedient, I shall commune with my own heart, and endeavour to awaken and raise my spirit by previous exercises, before I enter upon the common duties of divine worship; and shall always charge my soul not to rush into the presence of God in an irreverent and indevout manner, lest I draw down his displeasure upon me at the very time I profess to honour his name.

SECT.

SECT. VIII.

DO I not love thee, O my Saviour? I humbly truſt I can ſay, thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I love thee. Either I am a ſtranger to my own heart, and ignorant after what objects it breaths and aſpires, or I unfeignedly, I prevailingly love thee. Art thou the darling of thine Almighty Father, his chief delight? And art thou not mine? Does not my ſoul follow hard after thee; prefer thy friendſhip to that of the whole world; eſteem all thoſe marks and traces of thine image, which prove my relation to thee, and intereſt in thee, more than the peculiar treaſure of kings? Does it not ardently deſire to be better acquainted with thee, according to the diſcoveries that are made of thee in the Goſpel? Would not all the pleaſures and entertainments of life be inſipid, and even tireſome without thee? To be with thee would not my ſoul willingly quit the body, even this moment, didſt thou call her, and ſhe was aſſured that her ſeperation from all things here below would be followed with a nearer union with thee? I love thee, O Jeſus, but not as I would, not as I ought to love thee! When I think of thy perſonal excellencies, thy condeſcenſions, thy ſufferings, thy death, and the glorious fruits of them, I am not able to conceive, much leſs deſcribe, the love I owe

thee; I can only say in general, that my love should have no other bounds than the capacity of my heart; I should love thee as much as I can love thee, and thus it is I would love thee. O let thy love kindle mine; let it mount into a flame; let this flame consume every visionary idol that usurps any part of the honour due to my Saviour; let it enliven every power, direct and consecrate every thought, every affection, every design; let me, and all I possess, be a sacrifice of love; to thee I devote it all, through whom all things are mine, and who art more than all other things can possibly be to me!

SECT. IX.

WHAT abundant reason, O most blessed Saviour, have I to rejoice and be glad in thee! In thee I have determined to rejoice always, in the contemplation of thy person, thy gospel, thy virtues, thy conquests, and thy glory, and even in thy cross; in all the great things thou hast done for us, and we already enjoy, and in the much greater thou hast promised, and we yet further wait for. I will heighten the common pleasures of this life by my joy in thee, and by rejoicing in thee under all the evils and troubles of it, will learn to forget or make light of them all, and to weep as

if

if I wept not. Thou art my ſanctuary and my hope; here I take refuge when purſued by my griefs, and doubts, and fears, even in thee, and the ſeveral ways I have of converſing with thee. O Jeſus, thou giveſt light to thoſe that are in darkneſs, ſtrength to the weak, reſt to the weary, and comfort to the diſtreſſed! O my Saviour, as nothing is wanting in the way of aſſiſtance and encouragement on thy part, I hope leſs ſhall be wanting on mine than hath hitherto been, in returns of praiſe, and ſervice, and obedience for the unſearchable riches of thy goodneſs!

SECT. X.

TELL me, O thou whom my ſoul loveth, my Saviour and my Lord, how I ſhall beſt expreſs my thanks to thee, among the other teſtimonies of thy regard to my happineſs, for this wiſe, this kind Inſtitution of the *Supper*, which together with the legacy of peace, as nearly related to, and cloſely linked with it, thou haſt bequeathed to thy Church! I am very ſenſible, that living in the neglect of this Ordinance would not ſhew my thankfulneſs for it, and have therefore determined to go, not only to the houſe of God with the multitude of them that keep holy thy Day, but with the ſmaller

number that delight to honour thee at thy *Table*. And to let the world see I am not submitting to a disagreeable task, which I would gladly be excused from, did I know how to find an evasion, I will go with a holy alacrity, and shall not be sorry to have the joy of my heart shine out in the light and serenity of my countenance, so there be no appearance of affectation in it. Draw me, O my Saviour, by the bands of love! Thou hast thus drawn me, and I feel the sweet constraint! O thou bright morning-star, irradiate the region of my soul with thy heavenly beams! Thou hast done it, and I bless the sacred influence! O my most worthy Advocate and Intercessor, as there is no coming unto the Father but by thee, so by thee it is I make my addresses, and in thy mediation, under the goodness and mercy of God, I place my trust! Present me to the divine Majesty, and plead with him for me in virtue of thy attoning sacrifice, and obedience unto death. Thou dost continually discharge this friendly office for all the sincerely penitent and faithful, and in this confidence I humbly offer up these my supplications to the Father of lights, and the Father of mercies.

A

PRAYER.

O THOU Infinite and Eternal Majeſty! The God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and our Father in heaven, vouchſafe with an eye of favour and compaſſion to behold thy ſinful creature, who now falls proſtrate before thee, in humble adoration of thy diſtinguiſhing and moſt undeſerved goodneſs to the children of men, and to me in particular, which I acknowledge to have been ſuch as beyond meaſure to enhance the guilt of my offences againſt thee. With what ſincerity, O Lord, thou deſireſt the converſion of ſinners, the proſperity of thy ſaints, and the happineſs of all that are upright in heart, thou haſt abundantly diſcovered in the incarnation and death of thy well-beloved Son, our moſt worthy Mediator and Advocate, Jeſus Chriſt; and in the rich variety of means which thou haſt kindly provided for the healing the manifold diſorders of our nature, and our continual progreſs towards perfection! As for all theſe I bleſs and praiſe thy wiſe goodneſs, ſo, in a

particular manner, and not leaſt of all, for the Inſtitution of the *Holy-Supper*, which coming recommended by the authority of my bleſſed Saviour, and bearing his name, as it was appointed in honour of his memory, I deſire ever to ſet a very high value upon.

Being not only allowed, but invited, to attend this ſacred feaſt, I joyfully accept the invitation, humbly truſting that thy Grace hath made me in ſome degree meet to partake of ſo invaluable a privilege; and entreating thee, that what is further wanting, in order to my communicating with yet greater advantage and acceptance, the ſame Grace may ſupply. O let the blood of Jeſus thy Son cleanſe me from all ſin; and his Spirit, even that eternal Spirit through which he offered himſelf without ſpot unto God, enlighten, ſanctify, and raiſe my ſpirit, naturally dark, depreſt and polluted! Give me underſtanding in all thy precepts, and help me to diſcern the meaning, and to attain the ends of that holy Ordinance for which I am preparing. Let the ſacred fire, falling from heaven, conſume my droſſy affections, and kindle a flame of divine love in my breaſt never to be extinguiſhed.

Grant, O Lord, that I may approach with the deepeſt ſenſe of my own meaneſt, unworthineſs and guilt, and with the moſt exalted apprehenſions of thy holineſs and mercy,

cy, both which thou haſt ſo wonderfully diſplayed in the method of our redemption by Jeſus Chriſt; that I may receive the pledges of thy forgiving love, and the memorials of my Saviour's bloody paſſion with a lively faith, an abounding hope, with gratitude unfeigned, and joy unſpeakable; and may ſo feel the attractive influence of his example, the efficacy of his death, and the power of his reſurrection, that I may have my whole ſoul transformed into love, be all kindneſs and charity to men, and zeal for God and Jeſus, may die unto ſin, and live unto righteouſneſs, be able to tread on all the power of the enemy, to deny myſelf, deſpiſe the blandiſhments and temptations of the world, have my converſation in heaven, and overcome all oppoſition in the way to it; and, finally, after having loved and ſerved, and followed my Saviour without ſeeing him, may be with him, according to his own prayer, where he is, to behold his glory, and, with all the heavenly multitudes, aſcribe bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!

AT

The Lord's-Table.

SECT. I.

O MY soul, the happy, the wished for time is come, but will quickly be gone again! Lay hold of the opportunity, make the utmost advantage of it, that when past and gone, it may not be lost. Turn away thine eyes from beholding vanity, and look unto Jesus. Be all attention and reverence, thy thoughts united and elevated, every power engaged, and all thy affections present to wait on thy Lord, and minister to him at his *Table*.

SECT. II.

AND O thou, who alone knowest the hearts of all men, and alone hast them in thy power, the Almighty and Omnipotent God,

God, help thou mine infirmities, fix my mind, prone elſe to wander, cauſe every good ſeed thy hand hath ſown to ſpring up, perfect thine own work, ſpeak peace to my ſoul, bid every vain and every tumultuous paſſion be ſtill; the ſacrifice is ready, ſend down the ſacred fire, and help me in the ſame act to honour the Father and the Son, that I may have fellowſhip with both!

SECT. III.

BEHOLD, my ſoul, the Lamb of God which taketh away the ſin of the world! Rightly is he called a Lamb whoſe innocence was ſpotleſs, and his meekneſs and patience invincible; and the Lamb of God for his ſuperior excellence and dignity, and his being choſen to this office by the Father. He was led as a Lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a Sheep before his ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth; neither guile or complaint was found in his mouth, much leſs curſing and bitterneſs. Doſt thou profeſs thyſelf a follower of the Lamb and glory in the title? Learn then of him to be harmleſs and blameleſs, meek and lowly in heart, alike averſe from doing or deſerving evil, and ready to ſuffer it.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

BUT how does the Lamb of God take away sin? By bearing it in his own body on the tree. He was wounded for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him. O heavy load, which sunk the Son of God, in his body, to the grave, and, had it lain unremoved, would have sunk the world into ruins! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory, and blessing.

SECT. V.

THIS is the body of Christ. This sacramental bread is intended to signify and represent the body of Christ that was given for us, as an offering and sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour; and broken for us, as the bread in this Sacrament is broken before it is distributed. His sacred flesh was torn and disfigured with the scourges, pierced and violated with the nails and the spear. The Lamb that was seen in the midst of the throne had before been stretched on the cross, made a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men, highly approved and accepted of the first, adored by the second, mourned by some, derided and insulted over by others, of the last. O

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my ſoul, in thy judgment of this crucified Jeſus, take for thy guide the only wiſe God, and for thy pattern in thy behaviour towards him ſaints and angels!

SECT. VI.

DIDST thou, O Jeſus, with whom the moſt precious things and moſt excellent Beings that can be named among creatures are not once to be compared, didſt thou give thy ſacred ſelf for me on the croſs? And art thou ready to give thyſelf to me in thy *Supper?* I give, I conſecrate myſelf, without the leaſt reſerve, to thee. I could wiſh I was more worthy of thy acceptance. But ſuch as I have, and am, give I unto thee, and I give it heartily, as unto the Lord, to whom I confeſs myſelf to owe more than I can give. O do thou make me more like thyſelf, ſhed more of thy beauty and lovelineſs upon me, ſanctify me in every part and power, help me to be more perfect in every divine attainment, that I may be leſs unworthy of thee! And to the ſacrifice of thy broken body, grant, O my Saviour, I may be able to join the ſacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, which thou wilt not deſpiſe; thou diedſt for me, to thee I will henceforth live!

SECT.

SECT. VII.

MY bleſſed Saviour did not ſuffer in his body only. No; it was the leaſt part of his ſufferings that was viſible; his ſoul was ſorrowful even unto death, and laboured under ſuch an agony in the garden, that he ſweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground; prayed, *Father, if poſſible, let this cup paſs from me*, and had an angel diſpatched expreſs to comfort him. Nay, he was heard crying out on the croſs, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* Strange language for the Son of God! Does God forſake his own Son? The holy, the merciful God his innocent, his well beloved Son? He does for a time, ſo as to ſuſpend the uſual irradiations of his countenance, and to leave him in the hands of his enemies, to do unto him what they pleaſed. And when Jeſus ſuffers and dies, ſhall a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſins? When he ſuffers to expiate the ſins of others, ſhall I not be contented to ſuffer the pains and afflictions neceſſary for the cure of my own ſinful affections, and the trial and improvement of my own virtues? Surely if he laments his being forſaken, who was undoubtedly the Son of God, I have no juſt reaſon to queſtion my being a child of God, or (ſuppoſing myſelf to be ſo) to think I am hardly

hardly dealt with, merely becauſe deſtitute of thoſe ſenſible conſolations which I have ſometimes enjoyed.

SECT. VIII.

WAS there ever ſorrow like that of my Saviour's? Can any thing be imagined to exceed it? Yes, O my ſoul, tho' his ſorrows were unconceivably great, his love was greater, for his love made him willing to paſs through ſuch a ſea of ſorrows; his love brought him to that dark hour, and ſupported him in it; love to the rebellious ſons of men, love to thee, O my ſoul! Hereupon I cannot forbear crying out, was ever love like his love? And, reflecting on the unparalleled greatneſs both of his ſorrow and his love, I further ſay to myſelf, is there any evil like the evil of ſin, the guilty, the curſed occaſion of this dolorous ſcene? From whence I am unavoidably led to aſk, what ingratitude, O my ſoul, can be equal to thine, if after all that thy Redeemer hath done and ſuffered for thee, thou wilt not be perſuaded to break thy league with his enemies, that is, with thy ſins; Chriſt having no enemy but ſin, or ſuch as ſin hath made enemies to him?

SECT.

SECT. IX.

WHY, O my soul, is this bread called *the Communion of the body of Christ*, but at once to signify the object commemorated, a dying crucified Jesus, and the near relation among those who join in commemorating him; that because the bread is one, we also being many, are one body, forasmuch as we are all partakers of the one bread? Christians conspiring in this sacred action may justly be called *a Communion*, since the bread is one of which they jointly partake, and the sacrifice one and the same represented by this bread, they are hereby taught, that all the disciples of Christ, how great soever their number be, (acknowledging this sacrifice, and putting their trust in it, which they declare by their united participation of that one bread, which is the memorial of it) constitute but one mystical body, or society, of which they are the members, and Christ Jesus is the head. O my soul, let thy most ardent wishes, thy most importunate prayers, thy most unwearied endeavours, be for the peace and unity of the Christian Church, that all the faithful in Christ may be one, even as thou Father art in the Son, and the Son in thee, that they may be made perfect in one, and dwell and walk in love! And resolve, O my soul, that no prejudice, no provocation, shall ever alienate thy affections from any of those, who

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are fellow-members of the ſame body with thee, and make thee forget what thou oweſt them, or rather what thou oweſt to thy Saviour; thy regard to whom thou canſt not better expreſs, than by thy zeal to promote the peace of his church, and welfare and happineſs of all belonging to it!

SECT. X.

COULD the *Jews* ſay—*Behold, how he loved him*—ſeeing Jeſus weep at the grave of *Lazarus?* And may I not with much more reaſon cry out—Behold, how he loved us—when I think of his ſhedding not tears, but blood his vital blood for us? He loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his blood. His condeſcending to waſh his diſciples feet did not more plainly, or in a more affecting manner, diſcover his humility, than his waſhing us in his blood does his love. And for ſuch love, what is the moſt proper return but love? What other return can I make that will be accepted, if love be wanting? If I love him, he firſt loved me; his love was a love of compaſſion and benevolence, mine is a love of gratitude, mine is a debt, his free. If I love my fellow-chriſtian, if I love all mankind, if I love my enemies, the honour is his to have ſhewed me the way; and

and having such a guide and pattern, it would be an indelible reproach upon me not to follow him.

SECT. XI.

OBSERVE, O my soul, the time when thy Lord gave his disciples the new commandment of love, because, tho' only a circumstance, it is exceeding instructive and quickening! It seems to have been soon after he had been instituting his *Supper*. And what more proper season for the delivery of this law, or stronger conviction of the reasonableness of it, than that afforded by this Ordinance, in which the love of Jesus is seen rising, and spreading itself beyond all bounds, and triumphing over all opposition? If the commandment is new, in respect of the height to which the disciples of Christ are to carry their love, the example is still more new and uncommon by which it comes recommended. Should they be called to lay down their lives for the brethren, they would herein only love one another as he, their Lord and Master, had loved them. Nor can I regard it as such a hard saying, that I am to love my enemies (which he also enjoins me) since, when we were enemies, Christ died for us, that he might reconcile us to God, and, when dying,

dying, prayed for his enemies, enemies whom nothing but his blood would satisfy, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* I will learn, O my Saviour, how to love of thee! Never was the world taught a more excellent lesson; never before had this lesson so excellent a teacher.

SECT. XII.

THIS Cup is the New Testament, or Covenant, in Christ's blood; the blood of the New Covenant, which was shed for many for the remission of sins. *First*, this blood of attonement was shed for the remission of sins; then, after a short space intervening, the Gospel Dispensation was more fully opened, the New Covenant solemnly proclaimed, and repentance and remission of sins preached in the name of Christ among all nations. Besides the confirmation which the Gospel, containing God's Covenant of Grace with mankind, receives from the blood, or death of Christ, considered with all its circumstances, this blood, being the blood of a sacrifice, appointed by God, and represented in the sacramental *Supper*, is, as such, a sign or seal on God's part by which the Covenant is solemnized, and our assurance of his designs of favour and mercy towards us rendered as

compleat as we can reasonably wish it to be. Think well of this, O my soul, and never more harbour the least suspicion of the freeness, the abundance, or the extent of the divine mercy! The mercy of God is not less conspicuous in the Covenant itself, and the manner of establishing it, than his faithfulness is out of question in fulfilling it; only seek mercy in the way which the Gospel hath marked out to thee, and doubt not but thou shalt find it. The death of Christ, and now his life, is thy security. Let the mercy of God encourage thy hopes, and his faithfulness and truth, in keeping covenant, be a pattern to thine.

SECT. XIII.

O LORD, I am not my own; I never was, never can, never desire to be so, and hope and promise never to act as if I was! Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds. Thine I am by creation, thine by purchase, thine by covenant. I confess, and triumph in the relation, and acknowledge all the duties resulting from it. I have sworn, and cannot repent, that I will keep thy righteous statutes; and I now joyfully repeat the solemn engagement. Here I am; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Deal with

with me and mine as ſeemeth good in thy ſight; thy will and not mine ſhall be the rule of my deſires and actions, and thy glory my ſupreme end. It is thine to command and diſpoſe, mine to obey and ſubmit. Thou haſt bought me with a price, even with the precious blood of thine own Son, of which this ſacramental wine is a memorial. I therefore, as in gratitude bound, preſent my whole ſelf, body and ſoul to thee, a living ſacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is my reaſonable ſervice, with a full purpoſe of heart to glorify thee with both. I conſider this ſacramental eating and drinking not only as expreſſive of a very high privilege enjoyed by the worthy communicant, who is here treated with the condeſcending freedom of a domeſtic ſervant, a gueſt, a friend of God, and of Jeſus, but as an obligation upon me to behave at all times as thy devoted covenant ſervant in Chriſt. O Lord, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of my heart, and prepare my heart unto thee!

When retired, after Receiving.

SECT. I.

HAST thou not, O my ſoul, this day, had thy dear Lord evidently ſet forth as crucified before thy eyes, and, by commemorating his death in the *Holy-Supper* declared thyſelf a diſciple of this crucified Jeſus? And what is to be the temper of my mind, and my future behaviour, that it may agree with the character of one who profeſſes himſelf a diſciple of ſuch a Maſter? Ought I not to be crucified with Chriſt to the world, the pomps and vanities, the riches and pleaſures of it? Yes certainly. A diſciple of Chriſt is not to be taken up with theſe things. Did the Maſter embrace a life of meanneſs and poverty, and voluntarily ſubmit to a moſt painful and ignominious death? Was he not more deſpiſed by the men of the world, than he deſpiſed the things of it, and ſhewed himſelf ſuperior to its ſpirit,

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its wiſdom, its maxims and temptations? And ſhall the diſciple eagerly covet theſe things, admire them, value himſelf upon them, and place his happineſs in them? In all this would he ſhew himſelf mindful of his profeſſion? Or rather would he not ſhamefully forget it? Though I am not obliged to renounce the poſſeſſion, or the moderate uſe of any worldly advantages that Providence hath put into my hand, yet I am all ſuch love of them as would weaken and counteract the diviner affections, and much more that which is inconſiſtent with the prevalency of ſuch affections. I am to be of ſuch a temper with regard to theſe earthly things, as to be able readily to forego them, to enjoy without abuſing them, and being elated and corrupted by them, and to do all the good I can with them.

Can I have ſuch an object often in my view, as the Son of God covered with a cloud of affliction; a croſs, and this Lord of glory nailed to it, and expiring upon it, and yet not have my affections at all deadned to the world? Have the ſame high thoughts of it, and the ſame fond attachment to it as ever? O my ſoul, it is impoſſible, the contemplation of a crucified Jeſus muſt have other effects! It muſt, and I truſt it hath. I look unto Jeſus, and ſuddenly the glory of the world diſappears, its charms fade, and all its treaſures loſe their imaginary

value. Let those doat on the world, who never meditate on a crucified Saviour, never remember him at his *Table*; this I have done, and found the happy influence of that example which my Redeemer hath set before me so strong, that I no longer follow the world as a captive in chains the triumphal chariot of his conqueror. This, alas, I did as the other slaves of the world in the days of my vanity, but, thanks to my Saviour, am now a conqueror in my turn! His example sets me free, his death hath convinced me of my folly, and taught me other and sounder notions of things. Henceforth not those things which render me less like my Saviour, while he was in the world, shall be the matter of my glorying, but those by which I become conformed to him, among others, my being victorious over the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life; all which are not of the Father, but of the world, which passeth away, and the lusts thereof.

SECT. II.

I WILL not think of pleading with my Saviour, as what must render me dear to him—have I not eaten and drank in thy presence, and honoured thy memory—being

ing ſenſible I have no other anſwer to expect, if I am found among the workers of iniquity, than that terrible one, *Depart from me, I know you not.* He will not know me, becauſe I knew him no better; will not think his name honoured by being taken up by ſuch polluted lips; will be aſhamed to own me for his, becauſe ſo utterly unworthy of his approbation. The greater, my ſoul, thy honour in the near acceſs thou art allowed to thy Redeemer, and the oftener thou profeſſeſt thy ſubjection to him, by partaking of the memorials of his body and blood, the greater is thy obligation to obey him, and the greater will be thy guilt if thou doſt not! All the reſt of my life is to correſpond with this particular action, and to make good what I have virtually promiſed in it, though I ſhould not have expreſly promiſed it, as I have done, and intend to do again, if God give opportunity.

SECT. III.

BEWARE, O my ſoul, how thou frameſt a deciſive judgment of thy ſtate and character, merely, or chiefly from the manner in which the ſenſitive part of thy nature hath been affected at the *Holy-Table*! Perhaps thy paſſions have been ſtrongly

moved, thou haſt felt an unuſual livelineſs and flow of ſpirits; or, on the contrary, haſt had a kind of dead weight upon thee, which hath bowed thee down to the earth, a more than ordinary confinement in thy thoughts, and langour in thy affections. Now, O my ſoul, in caſe the warmth of thy affections be followed with an anſwerable tenderneſs of conſcience afterwards, happy art thou, and haſt abundant reaſon to be eaſy and thankful; not ſo if it be only a ſudden guſt of paſſion, which leaves thee as much under the power of ſenſual and worldly affections as ever; thy Religion is vain, and thou art yet to learn what are the firſt principles of practical Chriſtianity!

On the other hand, the reflection on the little fervour of the duties thou haſt performed, if it hath been owing to thy own neglect, and too great indulgence to the animal life, much more if it hath proceeded from a habit of indevotion, ought to humble thee, and fill thee with an uneaſy concern about thy preſent temper. But ſuppoſing it not to be chargeable on any ſuch criminal cauſes, (as thou haſt ground to believe it is not when thou art unfeignedly deſirous of doing better, and findeſt thy choice of that which is good, and the determination of thy will to it, more firm and entire, ſo as to be proof againſt the temptations that aſſault thee in thy chriſtian courſe) be not too

too ſevere in thy cenſure of thyſelf, inaſmuch as God, who knoweth thy frame, will make gracious allowances for the weakneſs of it. The thing thou art principally to attend to, is thy habitual diſpoſition, and ordinary conduct. Am I exact and regular in my common deportment, watchful over my thoughts, and careful that the general frame and poſture of my ſpirit be agreeable to my chriſtian profeſſion? Am I more circumſpect to avoid temptation, and more reſolved and ſucceſful in my conflict with it? Is my converſation in heaven, and my great ſolicitude how I ſhall keep myſelf in the love of God? This being ſuppoſed, I am juſtifyed to conclude, that the great deſign of the *Lord's-Supper*, and every other Goſpel-Inſtitution, hath been anſwered; that I have communicated with profit, if I have not done it with ſo much life and pleaſure as I could have wiſhed, and may therefore go on my way rejoicing that God hath accepted me.

SECT. IV.

HAST thou not, O my ſoul, this day, while commemorating the love of thy Saviour, and exciting thy own by the remembrance of his, reſolved to lead a more exemplary,

emplary, devout, and useful life than thou hast hitherto done? Such resolutions are perfectly just, and peculiarly agreeable to the Ordinance of the *Supper*, and I will suppose thine to have been sincere; yet, stop a moment, and consider those words of thy Saviour to his disciples, *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Even those who want not integrity of heart, are too often more forward to purpose and promise, than afterwards they are punctual in fulfilling their engagements; their readiness to promise shews the willingness of the spirit, that they have a spirit within them which hath strong convictions of duty, and laudable dispositions to the practice of it, while their failure, in part, though not entirely, in the performance, is a melancholy proof of the weakness of the flesh. The *Apostles* of Christ are a most memorable example of this, who bravely resolved to stand by their Master at all hazards, protesting, that though they should die with him, yet would they not deny him. Glorious resolution! But how poorly kept to; for when it came to the trial (to say nothing of the traitor *Judas*) all but one forsook him and fled, and he for his part did worse than forsake him, he denied him; and this soon after they had been celebrating the *Supper* with their Master, and though they were zealously affected to him, as they had reason to be, having received

ceived a thouſand marks of the moſt tender friendſhip from him, and three of them being more highly honoured than the reſt with the ſight of his transfiguration. And is this the end of all? From this I learn the kind and provident care of our divine Maſter in the counſel he gave his diſciples, and the neceſſity of following it, *To watch and pray that they enter not into temptation.*

I am not to truſt to the duty I have lately performed, nor to the devotion, tho' real, I have exerciſed in it; nay, nor to the Grace which I may have reaſon to think hath been beſtowed on me as the reward of my unfeigned deſire and endeavour to pleaſe God, unleſs I further add my own continued prayers and vigilance. As the mere outward action in the Sacrament does not convey Grace, but the Spirit of God by it, nor is a qualification for receiving it, but the temper of mind, and right intention and probity of ſoul with which I communicate, ſo the influence which this Sacrament hath, in the after courſe of my life, to prepare me for the more ready diſcharge of other duties, and to preſerve me in the hour of temptation, does not immediately and neceſſarily flow from the Sacrament itſelf, but depends on my doing my part after the ſolemnity is over, as well as in the act of receiving; otherwiſe I ſhall have no cauſe to wonder, if I am worſted by temptations, and quickly

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loſe my reliſh for the pleaſures of devotion. Be ſure then, O my ſoul, to fix this deep in thy remembrance, that neither the love of Chriſt to thee, nor thine to him, nor thy converſing with him at his *Table*, however encouraging and delightful, will abſolutely ſecure thee from temptation (God, for wiſe reaſons, permitting temptations of divers kinds to befal us for the trial of our virtue and fidelity) or in it, without watchfulneſs and prayer! In prudence then take care, that both theſe accompany and follow all thy good purpoſes and diſpoſitions, whether at the *Table* of the Lord, or at any other time when thy affections are more than uſually enlarged and ſtirred within thee, that ſo whatever temptations occur to draw thee off from thy duty, or to make thee leſs vigorous in it, being mindful of the vows of God that are upon thee, thou mayeſt be more than conqueror over them all.

SECT. V.

THE cloud which hath guided thy meditations hitherto has a bright as well as a dark ſide, it is a cloud of glory. For the preſent then change the ſcene, O my ſoul, from the humiliation of the Son of God, which thou haſt been called to remember in his *Supper*, turn thine eyes to his exalted ſtate, from

from a dying to a riſen Saviour, from his firſt coming in the form of a ſervant, to his ſecond appearance in the form of God, when being ſat down on the throne of his glory, and all nations gathered before him, he ſhall ſeparate them one from the other, as a ſhepherd divideth the ſheep from the goats, and abſolve or condemn, reward or puniſh them, according as their works have been! Yet a little while, O my ſoul, and he that ſhall come will come, and will not tarry; and when he ſhall appear, they alſo that have waited for him ſhall appear with him in glory, having their bodies raiſed from the grave, and made like unto his! With this proſpect I will comfort myſelf under all the infelicities of life, and apprehenſions of death.

I muſt die, paſs through the dark valley, drink of the cold cup that my Saviour drank of; but, if I belong to him as a living member of his myſtical body, I ſhall riſe again to a bleſſed immortality. It was not the deſign of his death to excuſe his followers from dying, but as connected with his reſurrection, to ſave them from the terrors of that laſt enemy; foraſmuch as death is now only a dark paſſage to the regions of immortal light and glory, and we lay down this body, with all its frailties and imperfections, to take it up again without them, bright, active, and incorruptible. Look forward, O my ſoul, to that glorious day! Think what a joyful, what

what a surprizing meeting that will be of perfected minds with their glorified bodies, of all the saints that have ever lived in the most distant regions and ages of it, with one another! Think of that divine and eternal festival in which they shall all join with one heart, in the kingdom of their Father, and at which thou, O my soul, shalt be a transported guest!

Now we necessarily meet in separate, and, alas, too often in divided and opposite communions, estranged and alienated in our affections for want of knowing one another better; now they are but few with whom thou canst personally join in the common duties of divine worship, still fewer in the *Lord's-Supper*; thy many infirmities abate the pleasures of thy best performances, and the pleasure, as it is imperfect, so is transient too; hereafter, all the followers of the Lamb, all the faithful servants of God, a multitude without number, shall worship together in the temple above, unite their praises to God and the Lamb, mingle their affections like so many confluent streams in one common ocean of love, be delivered from every temptation, and from every grief, be made perfect in knwledge, holiness and bliss, and so continue to everlasting ages.

O what life and spirit should the meditation of this infuse into all my religious performances! How shouldst thou stretch all thy

thy faculties, O my ſoul, and aim to do the will of God as the angels do in heaven, and as thou thyſelf ſhalt do it when thou art come thither! Bleſſed time, when all upright minds ſhall ſee that wonderful Perſon face to face whom now they behold as through a glaſs darkly! Bleſſed time, when the preſence of the Redeemer ſhall make all memorials of him needleſs! O moſt bleſſed time, the expectation of ſo many ages, when the church ſhall receive the immediate and fulleſt emanations of that love which ſhe is now raviſhed with the contemplations of! Then ſhalt thou acknowledge, O my ſoul, that eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither can enter into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath laid up for them that love him! Then ſhalt thou reap the fruits of thy Lord's victories, and thy own, of his victory over death, and of thy own through him, over ſin and the world! Then, in fine, will it be true, in the higheſt ſenſe the words are capable of, *That we are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born which are written in heaven, to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, to Jeſus the Mediatour of the new covenant, and to God the Judge of all.*

A PRAYER.

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PRAYER.

GREAT and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty—what then art thou whose power hath produced and sustains, whose wisdom both contrived and directs, and whose goodness crowns them all! I praise thee, O my God, from the bottom of my soul, that, having made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, thou hast in the course of thy Providence so ordered the circumstances of my birth and education, that I should be a partaker of the Grace of the Gospel from my earliest years, and know the wonderful works of God, even those things which many Prophets and Kings desired to see and hear, and could not.

For all my powers and faculties, as a reasonable creature, all the testimonies of thy paternal care, all the effects of thy common bounty

bounty and goodneſs, in the courſe of my life, I bleſs and magnify thy holy name; but more eſpecially for thy diſtinguiſhing Grace and Mercy in Jeſus Chriſt, in whom, while I rejoice and glory, I cannot forget to pray that all mankind may enjoy the ſame happineſs, and the whole world know that thou haſt ſo loved it as to give thine only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.

Hear, O moſt gracious God, the prayers of thy faithful people for the enlargement of that kingdom of truth and righteouſneſs which thou haſt ſet up among men, that the Religion of Chriſt may be profeſſed and practiſed in its greateſt ſimplicity; grace be with all them that love the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity, their numbers continually increaſe, their conſolations abound, the multitude of them that believe be of one heart and one ſoul, and the church of Chriſt appear to be the ſchool where immortal ſouls are trained up for the more perfect worſhip, and the everlaſting felicity of the heavenly world.

O let not thy Grace be received in vain by me! Let it not be in vain that I have been ſo fully taught the way of the Lord, have had both external and internal aſſiſtances, and every ſort of encouragement, that I might abound in all the fruits of holineſs, which are by Chriſt to the glory and praiſe of God.

Forgive me, O merciful Father, that I have made thee returns so unsuitable to thy great goodness towards me, to the vast and numberless obligations thou hast laid me under, and the repeated engagements I have taken upon myself! O forgive me the coldness of my love, my sloth and inactivity, the little proficiency I have made in the virtues of the christian and divine life, with the advantage of so excellent a rule, so perfect an example, so free an access to the throne of Grace, such almighty aids, and the prospect of so glorious a reward!

O may the consideration of thy readiness to pardon fill me with an ingenuous hatred and detestation of all sin; and my abhorrence of sin, and care to avoid it, and all the occasions of and temptations to it for the future, be a satisfying proof that all my sins are actually forgiven me, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ thy Son, whose death I have been shewing forth in his *Supper!* And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make me perfect to do his will, fulfilling in me the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.

Help me to carry in mind the design of one duty to dispose me for another, and of all the instrumental duties of Religion to beget and strengthen

ſtrengthen thoſe exalted principles and habits of goodneſs in my ſoul, by which it will be more and more ripened for the life of heaven. By faith let me be able to ſee him who is inviſible, and always to walk as in his preſence, and be more affected and influenced by the contemplation of an abſent Saviour, in every view of him.

While I meditate on the bleſſed Jeſus, enduring the contradiction of ſinners, and humbling himſelf unto death, even the death of the croſs, may I be inſtructed what to expect in the preſent life, and after what manner to behave under all the ſufferings and afflictions of it; and may a riſen and an exalted Redeemer elevate my heart above all the vanities of this tranſitory ſtate of things to that happy world, whither he, my Lord, and the forerunner of all the faithful, is gone; that I may know him, and the power of his reſurrection, and count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, for whoſe ſake let me be willing to ſuffer the loſs of all things, not counting my life dear to me, ſo I may finiſh my courſe with joy.

Give me, O Lord, to feel more of the mighty power of thy Grace, concurring with the Goſpel of thy Son, to mortify every inordinate deſire, to confirm every good purpoſe, to purify and regulate my affections, and to change my whole ſoul more and more into

a divine image and likeneſs! By that Grace let me be enabled to trample on all the temptations to ſin, and to keep a conſcience void of offence both towards God, and towards man; that my love to thee may be ſuperlative, and, tho' not adequate to thy excellencies and thy benefits, which it can never be, may bear ſome proportion to my capacities; that my devotion may be unaffected and fervent, my reſignation entire, and obedience chearful, uniform, and conſtant.

To men let me be juſt and charitable, kindly affectioned, ready to do good and to communicate as I have ability and opportunity, carrying it towards all with a mild, a peaceable and chriſtian ſpirit; while, as to myſelf, I am ſober-minded, poor in ſpirit, and pure in heart, and tho' not free from all mental irregularities, am yet getting ground upon them daily; oppoſing my inclinations as often as they oppoſe my duty, deny myſelf, am temperate in all things, bridle my tongue, and labour to be an example of patience, meekneſs, contentment, and to come behind in no good thing, looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life; that ſo, when I ſhall have done the work which thou haſt given me to do, and ſuffered all that thou ſaweſt meet for the trial of my faith, and hope, and ſubmiſſion to thy will,

I may

I may finally inherit the promiſes which thou haſt made us in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord. *Amen.*

Rev. v. 13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all that are in them, heard I, ſaying, Bleſſing and Honour, and Glory and Power, be unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

THE REGULATION OF DIVERSIONS;

Designed principally for the

BENEFIT of YOUNG PERSONS.

1708

THE REGULATION OF DIVERSIONS.

THE forming *Young People* to a ſolid and ſerious temper hath been always accounted a matter of the laſt importance both to themſelves, and the publick, in regard nature generally keeps the ply that is firſt given it, and a wild undiſciplined Youth is ſeldom known to make a *religious* and *uſeful* man. The diſorders committed in the firſt ſtage of life are much like a groſs miſtake in our way at firſt ſetting out upon a journey, which carries us ſo much wider of our end, and is conſequently the more difficult to be retrieved.

On this account, I ſhould think, whoever offers *Young Perſons* to be their Guide, provided he give ſecurity he will not miſlead them, may reaſonably expect a welcome: their

their inclinations and deſires are warm and impetuous, and, like their blood, on which they very much depend, quickly inflamed; the world they live in is full of objects fitted to ferment and ſet them on fire; in ſhort, all things within and without (if care be not taken) conſpire to ruin and betray them; the heat of their imagination hurries them on, and will not ſuffer them to make a ſtand, that they may coolly conſider their danger, and enter into all the reflections neceſſary to the exactneſs of their conduct; for which reaſon it is requiſite that rules and meaſures of acting be formed to their hands, and that they be very particular; theſe they may have the leiſure to read, and the review will coſt them no great trouble; but to draw them out in order for themſelves, (no one aſſiſting them) if it be not beyond their capacity, would too much fatigue and vex their patience. Upon ſuch views as theſe it is that I compoſed the following *Eſſay*, which, I can be witneſs, was honeſtly deſigned, and, ſhould the ſucceſs be but anſwerable to the goodneſs of the intention, it will be no little ſatisfaction.

It is eaſy to obſerve there are certain paſſions and qualities belonging to every age, and which form its peculiar character. *Covetouſneſs*, is the vice of *Old-Men*; an immoderate and unwearied concern to raiſe their fortunes and greaten their families is a com-

common fault of the *Middle-Aged*; and the *Younger Sort* are diſtinguiſhed chiefly by their violent love of pleaſure, of ſenſual worldly pleaſure. Pleaſure is indeed the idol of the *Young*, to which all things elſe are ſacrificed; it is made a kind of buſineſs, they devote themſelves intirely to it, and live as if they had nothing to do but gratify a vain extravigant humour. They are apt to think themſelves a ſort of privileged perſons whom the prohibation of pleaſure does not reach; imagine the vigour and gaiety of their age, the ſtrength of their inclinations, and the quick reliſh they have of pleaſure, are ſo many *probabilities* they were made on purpoſe for it, and will bear them out in all the liberties they take.

Now, I acknowledge, pleaſure does much better become the vivacity of Youth than the langour and gravity of Age; and that degree of pleaſure a *Young Man* might innocently enough enjoy, an *Old Man* could not give himſelf to without a breach of decency. But let not the *Young* therefore fancy they have a toleration to go what length they pleaſe; if *Youth* be not forbid the injoyment of pleaſure, yet in this injoyment it is to keep within the bounds of Religion and Virtue. It is an ill character in any one, (be his age what it will,) to be *a lover of pleaſure more than a lover of God.*

The

The pleaſures of ſenſe are of *two* kinds; ſome are in themſelves unlawful, and abſolutely forbidden us, as *fornication*, *uncleanneſs*, *&c.* Here we do not ſay the *deſire* is to be tempered and moderated, but quite ſuppreſſed; nothing leſs will ſuffice.

The pleaſures of this ſort are ſo groſs and defiling, ſo oppoſite to the deſign of Chriſtianity, to that purity of heart it requires from all who profeſs it; and tend ſo directly to undermine the principles of Natural Religion, that the Reaſon and Underſtanding of Young People themſelves, as inconſiderate as they are, bluſh at them; and if at any time they make bold with them it is not that they are ignorant of the guilt and pollution that cleave to ſuch carnal gratifications. I ſhall therefore paſs over the pleaſures of this kind, as carrying their own condemnation with them, and proceed to conſider the *ſecond* ſort of pleaſures that are in themſelves, and abſtracting from the abuſes made of them, lawful and allowed, and which therefore within certain reſtrictions and limitations may be lawfully deſired.

The danger here is the greater, becauſe not being apprehenſive of it, we grow careleſs and ſecure. The object is, in general, harmleſs and inoffenſive, and that ſatisfies us; not reflecting that the deſire of an *innocent object* may be culpable through its exceſs of ſome other irregularity attending it.

Amongſt

Amongſt the particulars of this ſort of pleaſure I ſhall confine myſelf at preſent to the head of *Diverſions*, becauſe a ſubject the leaſt worn of any.

With theſe Young Perſons are generally in love with to the height of *fondneſs*; which as it is an extreme on the one hand, ſo it would not be a leſs on the other to lay them under an abſolute reſtraint as to theſe things; for neither does Religion require this, nor will the preſent ſtate of human nature bear it, which ſoon breaks if always kept at full bent.

By *Diverſions* here I mean a ſort of medium between *ſloth* and *buſineſs*; actions that take us off from the main occupations of life, and are not, in themſelves conſidered, of any uſe, but only as they prepare for others. Now it is poſſible to err by giving either too much or too little; and both are alike prejudicial; a faculty never uſed grows ruſty, and when continually in uſe wears out. So that it is really no advantage to our general or particular Calling to be engaged in it without interruption; we tire under our burthen, and diſpatch but a little way in a great deal of time; whereas a ſeaſonable *Diverſion* would give us freſh heart, and be like oiling the wheels, which makes them move the more pleaſantly, and with the greater ſpeed: beſides all which, it eſcapes no one, that when a perſon is tied down to a thing

a thing and cannot have a looſe from it now and then, it tends to diſguſt him againſt it.

Religion itſelf, however lovely and amiable it be, will look frightful and terrible to a Young Perſon that is obliged to be always poring on it; and the duties of it (which, when performed by the ſoul in a devout and animated temper, affords ſo much pleaſure) will become extremely irkſome and tedious, if they return too often, or be drawn out too long. *Diverſions* therefore are neceſſary for Youth, (and I fear in ſome degree for more ſtaid perſons) but the miſery is, they never ſay it is enough; they ſhould be allowed to manage their recreations after their own way did they know how to obſerve a meaſure; but generally when left to their own diſcretion they exerciſe no conſcience in the matter. Give me leave therefore to preſcribe you ſome prudential rules for the better *Regulation* of your *Diverſions*. Of theſe ſome regard the *choice* of your *Diverſions*, and the *circumſtances* directly relating to them; others more immediately concern the *deſire*; and others the actual *uſe* and *enjoyment*.

As for the *choice* of your *Diverſions*.

1. Be ſure they be ſuch as are allowable. Learn to divert thyſelf without offence to thy own, or the conſcience of thy neighbour. Let not that good old maxim be forgotten, *In matters of a diſputable nature the ſafer ſide is to be choſen.* It is doubted whether

ther or no thou canſt lawfully play at a certain game, but no one doubts but thou mayeſt lawfully let it a lone; in prudence therefore forbear, for why ſhouldeſt thou play away thy ſoul, a thing too precious to be ſtaked againſt the monarchy of the world? *Diverſions* enough are to be found unqueſtionably innocent, and what folly is it then to venture on ſuch as will admit of an objection? And it is the opinion of very good Divines, that all games of *chance* are of this number.

Monſieur *Fleury* thinks Play was abſolutely unknown to the *Jews*, ſeeing we do not find the name once mentioned in ſcripture; and even to this day the *Arabians* and other Eaſtern People play not at games of *hazard*, at leaſt not by the allowance of their * Law. This is certain, they are more liable to abuſe than others, and offer more opportunities and temptations to cheat. When a perſon that is a kind of profeſſor in gaming ſhall play with all the ſkill he is maſter of, and meer *chance* ſhall give the game to another who hath little inſight into the matter, it is a ſtrong provocation to recover the game by ſome knaviſh trick. Old Players fancy that they have a ſort of right to win, and if it may not be done by fair means, they will do it by foul.

You

* Mæurs des Iſraelites pt. 2. c. 13.

You will ſay, if others abuſe a thing, that is no reaſon why I ſhould be denied the uſe of it; I have played and found it no ſuch ſnare to me. But let me aſk thee, what has been thy ſecurity? Hath it not been reſtraining *grace?* If ſo, have a care thou do not treſpaſs too far. But let it be ſuppoſed there is no more danger to thee from one than from another *Diverſion*, yet by thy example thou doſt encourage others that will prove too weak for the temptation; and is it imaginable thou canſt knowingly occaſion ſin in another, merely becauſe thou wilt not abſtain from an unneceſſary action, and be altogether blameleſs? Yet more, it is to be conſidered that, in judging of the *lawfulneſs* of a *Diverſion*, I ought not to be concluded by my ſingle opinion, contrary to the ſenſe of other pious and good people. Though my judgement is not to be determined by theirs, but by the evidence of the thing, yet I humbly conceive, it is but fit their judgement ſhould have ſome influence on my practice. Charity obliges me to ſhow ſo much regard to the peace of a fellow Chriſtian, not to grieve him by doing an action he thinks diſpleaſing to God, and which might be as well omitted.

And then, I would propoſe it to your further thoughts whether it be not a duty to ſtand more upon our reputation than to part with any portion of it for the ſake of a *Diverſion*;

verſion; and whether we ought not to value more the eſteem of good Chriſtians than to forfeit it rather than forego a particular way of recreating ourſelves? We muſt be all aware that with whomſoever an ill opinion of us prevails, by alienating their minds from our perſons it will diſable us for doing any great good to them. And think again whether it can be juſtifiable for a man, out of an unreaſonable bigotry to any Play, to cut himſelf off from a part of his uſefulneſs in the world? With all this remember St. *Paul*'s Exhortation, where among other marks and characters of thoſe things that he commends to our practice, this is one, [a] *that they be of good report*; though I *deferr* not ſo much to opinion and cuſtom as to think they can alter the intrinſic nature of actions, ſo that virtue ſhall become vice, or vice virtue, (as the incautious expreſſions of ſome men would almoſt tempt one to believe they did) yet I cannot forbear being of the mind, that an action in its ſelf *indifferent* may become by accident *ſinful*, when ſtamped with an ill name by general ſuffrage, or by a number of conſcientious Chriſtians.

There is one thing more which, though hinted at before, deſerves to be a more particular ſubject of your thoughts. Though a *Dierſion* be in its ſelf undoubtedly lawful, and moreover be not ſcrupled by any one, yet

[a] Phil. iv. 8.

is not this alone ſufficient to warrant me in the uſe of it, unleſs it be ſuch too as I can uſe with ſafety. There is a great variety in the tempers of men, and this makes that a temptation to one which is not ſo to another. Now if upon examination I find that this or that *Diverſion* hath more than once drawn me into ſin, hath engaged my paſſions too far, or otherwiſe inſnared me, it is to me *forbidden fruit.* I pray *that God would not lead me into temptation,* and can I then allowably run myſelf into it?

11. In your *Choice* of *Diverſions* prefer thoſe that will beſt anſwer their end. This, I doubt, is but little minded by the moſt, who take the *Diverſions* that are next at hand, or which the company vote for, or to which they are led by pure humour, nay often which meer *chance* has thrown them upon. Not a thought is laid out this way, though there be room for the exerciſe of Reaſon in this as well as in caſes of greater moment. I own that as trifling in things ſerious is a fault, ſo to be ſerious in trifles is a folly; whereupon you may ſuſpect it would be downright jeſting with your Reaſon to imploy it in ſtating the nature and differences of *Diverſions*; but how much ſoever this may look like trifling, it may ſometimes happen to have very ſerious conſequences, and, by not conſulting your own temper, nor the quality of the remedy, it is not only poſſible to miſs of the end that every reaſon-

reaſonable man ought to deſign in his *Diverſions*, but to turn them into inſtruments of miſchief.

The general end of *Diverſions* is by invigorating nature, and providing her with freſh recruits of ſpirit, to fit her for better and more chearful ſervice; from whence it follows that all too violent and intenſe exerciſes that exhauſt the ſpirits, overſtrain our powers, and crack the ſinews of the conſtitution, are heedfully to be ſhuned. The parcular and immediate end is, either to relieve the mind under *melancholy*, and then ſome *Diverſions* that will amuſe the thoughts at the ſame time that it imploys the body is beſt; or to cure it of a fit of dulneſs, and then bodily exerciſe prudently managed will be of uſe, leaving the thoughts to reſt themſelves; I mean, as to any vigorous and cloſe application: or laſtly, the end propoſed is the health and vigour of the animal part; and in this caſe likewiſe a gentle and agreeable motion is moſt proper; but your own *prudence* will eaſily direct you here; I juſt mention theſe things to convince you that *diſcretion* is to be uſed, that a thoughtleſs and promiſcuous choice of *Recreations*, without making any diſtinction between them, is highly abſurd.

You will all grant me it is not *indifferent* what are the ends we propoſe in our *Diverſions*, for being rational creatures we are to have ſome rational aim in all our actions,

not excepting thoſe of the loweſt rank; and if Reaſon is to ſway us in the choice of our end, it would be nonſenſe to lay it aſide in the choice of the means. A man makes himſelf leſs ridiculous by levelling at a mean contemptable end, than by fixing on an important and good deſign, and purſuing it by means which he ſpends not one moment to conſider whether they are adapted or not adapted to their end.

Theſe Two Rules may ſuffice for the *Choice* of your *Diverſions* themſelves. The *Circumſtances* relating to them are next to be conſidered, namely, *Time*, *Place* and *Company*.

1. Let your *Diverſions* be well-timed. Do not think of diverting yourſelves when there is no need for it, and more ſerious affairs demand your application. Remember *Recreations* are to get you new ſtrength, not to conſume that you have already. *To every thing* (ſaith the Wiſeman) *there is a ſeaſon*; *and a time to every purpoſe under the heaven*; *a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance*; and not a little depends upon a nice obſervation of theſe times. Some ſeaſons require reſpite, the ſpirits are exceeding dull and flaggy, or imployed by nature in her *mechanical operations*; and he that at ſuch times ſhall call them off, and put them on cloſe ſtudy and thinking is not only an ill huſband of his health

health, but an ill manager of buſineſs; for, let his heart be what it will, he muſt expect to make but ſorry muſick when the inſtrument is out of tune. On the contrary, when all is ſpritely and ſerene within, and ſoul and body both are in good humour, let us lay hold of the opportunity, and as the Proverb directs, *Make hay while the Sun ſhines.* We are now capable of doing things with eaſe and diſpatch, and it will be greatly to miſplace our activity to beſtow it wholly on our Play; we ſhould rather look on it as an invitation from Providence to mind our work, and ought accordingly to improve it to this end. This holds in a more ſpecial manner with thoſe who ſeldom know a clear ſky; let ſuch double their diligence when nature ſmiles, and make their advantage of the kind fit.

11. Let the place you chuſe for your *Diverſions* be unexceptionable. You are not ignorant that the Law bars you from *Publick-Houſes*; and what is it better than a contempt of the *National Authority*, to frequent them notwithſtanding? There is not, it is true, that care taken in the execution of the Law as might be wiſhed, yet the *obligation* to obedience is ſtill the ſame. If the Miniſters of the Law neglect to diſcharge their duty, the Law does not thereupon loſe its binding force which it derived from a higher fountain, for we are to be in ſubjection *not only for wrath,*

but conſcience ſake. Let it not be pleaded that you are not within the *deſign* of the *Statute*; which was purely to prevent the idleneſs of labouring people, that they might not ſpend their time and money at the *Ale-Houſe*, when the neceſſities of their families called for it; for granting this to have been the main intent of the Law, yet, foreſeeing this end could not otherwiſe be effected, our Legiſlators have wiſely made this Prohibition general; ſo that it is expected from you that you carefully fly ſuch forbidden ground, if not for your own ſakes, for the ſake of your poor neighbour. And this reaſon, on which the Law is founded, would make a diſtinction of *Places*, though we ſhould ſuppoſe the Law to have left them *indifferent*. The ill conſequences of your haunting Houſes of ill fame are notorious; many of the poorer Idlers will take countenance from your example, and eſcape unpuniſhed. The rank and condition you hold will fright the Officers from meddling with you; and, that they may not be thought partial, they will leave other offenders to go unmoleſted, and thus more families than one ſhall come to want bread by your means; beſides which there is perſonal danger in the caſe, liquor muſt be called for, and when brought will, no doubt, be diſpoſed of the common way, till at laſt you are got within a juſt ſuſpicion of having drank more than is ſufficient. I may add, that firſt or laſt,

you

you run the hazard of falling into bad company, of which there is ſeldom a ſcarcity at ſuch places—and this minds me of the third thing.

III. Take heed with whom you divert yourſelves, for it is of more conſequence than you are aware who the perſons are you make your partners. Avoid thoſe that are given to paſſion, [b] *For an angry man ſtirreth up ſtrife.* It is odds but he will find an occaſion to quarrel before you part, and then farewell to all the pleaſure and harmony of the converſation; ſo that the love of pleaſure, which Youth is ſo much governed by, ſhould teach caution here. But the worſt is, by herding with perſons of this character, a man takes to their ill qualities, as it is natural for one flame to be kindled at another, and brawls and ſcuffles become ſo familiar that he inſenſibly ſlides into them when in more civil company. Let me further preſs this advice by the authority of *Solomon*, [c] *Make no friendſhip with an angry man, and with a furious man thou ſhalt not go*; and the reaſon he adds is the ſame with that I juſt now mentioned *viz. Leſt thou learn his way, and get a ſnare to thy ſoul.* Neither let a man of *corrupt morals* ſhare thy Recreations, be his temper the beſt in the world; nay, for this very reaſon ſhun him the more carefully. The *ſmoothneſs* of his behaviour, and his *ſweet*

[b] Prov. xxix. 22. [c] Prov. xxii. 24, 25.

inſinuating humour will but make the poiſon of his example go down the more glibly. May this perſuade thee to be upon thy guard, and wiſely conſider thy danger. An accidental meeting at a *Diverſion* hath ſometimes been the foundation of a laſting acquaintance; a natural goodneſs of temper often fatally recommends a wicked man, and from an indearedneſs for his perſon we eaſily paſs to a liking of his vices. And will it be any mitigation of my miſery, ſhould I periſh by this means, that a *good tempered man* was the inſtrument of my ruin?—So much for the *Choice* of your *Diverſions*, and the *Circumſtances* relating to them.

I come now to the *Second Thing* propoſed, to give you thoſe *Directions* that more immediately concern the *Deſire.*

1. Let your *Deſires* be cool and temperate, for thus only can they be regular. The ſeveral degrees of *Deſire* ſhould be always matched by equal degrees of worth and ſignificancy in the object; and where that is ſomething of a low concern, it is a ſhame if it kindle a rageing paſſion. Would not a man betray a childiſh folly that ſhould be eagerly bent upon hunting down a butter-fly? The meanneſs of his ſpirit is not much leſs, that is earneſt and impatient for ſome little *Diverſion.* Let us take up that wiſe reſolution of St. *Paul, not to be brought under the power of any.*

Is

Is it fit, Sirs, I ſhould govern my *Deſires* or that my *Deſires* ſhould govern me? You will ſay, that I ſhould govern my *Deſires*; for being mine, my right and property, I may juſtly exerciſe that dominion nature hath given me over them. Well, let me aſk you again, is it fit *Reaſon* ſhould govern *Deſire*, or *Deſire* govern *Reaſon?* This queſtion, which you may think harder to be ſolved than the former, is in effect the very ſame; for it is *Reaſon* makes the man, and if a man rule his *Deſires* it muſt be by the mediation of his *Reaſon*. Wherefore, if the *Deſires* of things of an inferior nature be reſtleſs and vehement, not being in ſubjection to *Reaſon*, they are no longer in their natural ſtate, they are undue and exorbitant. And then to make you yet more cautious how you ſuffer ſuch *Deſires* to take head, conſider as they get ſtrength *Reaſon* loſes it; and they are always moſt craving where there is the greateſt impotence or diſorder of the underſtanding, as in children and mad-folks. But if haſty and inordinate *Deſires* of *Diverſions*, and ſuch like trifles, argue a weakneſs of *Reaſon*, they ſhow yet more plainly a defect of *Religion*. A ſoul full of the ſpirit of Chriſtianity hath a ſort of indifference for all that is in the world, and though it needs the uſe of theſe things ſometimes, yet it is not glued to them; whereas he whoſe *Deſires* towards any thing here below are loud and importunate, is tied faſt to it, and conſequently

quently hangs the looſer from God. When the ſtrength and ſpirits of the mind are waſted on other matters, nothing but indifference and lukewarmneſs are left for objects of a religious concern; as you may obſerve thoſe trees that run out into abundance of groſſer ſhoots ſeldom bear much fruit, becauſe all the beſt juices go to maintain thoſe uſeleſs luxuriances.

You need not be informed when your *Deſire* of *Diverſions* is intemperate---if it puſh you forward to a too frequent injoyment of them—if you are continually in queſt of new ones—if more preſſing affairs are ordinarily made to ſtoop when they lie in the way of your *Diverſions*—if having reſolved upon a *Diverſion*, and the weather or ſome accident prevent you, you are peeviſh and out of humour, vexed with the occaſion that detains you, or ſullenly idle away your time rather than you will apply yourſelves to buſineſs—if theſe are the effects of your *Deſires*, they are ſo very bad that you may well conclude the cauſe not to be very good.

11. Be not very deſirous of excelling in any game or exerciſe; for beſides that this ſhews a mean taſte, and a wrong judgment of things, as if ſkill and maſtery at the plays and occupations of children (for in truth all the pretty methods we take to pleaſe and flatter human life are no better; as if, I ſay, theſe little things) were greatly to be coveted;

ed; beſides it diverts us from aiming at that *wiſdom that is from above*, and the heavenly ſkill of glorifying God, and managing our high calling to the nobleſt purpoſes; beſides all theſe diſadvantages attending it, it hath likewiſe theſe unhappy conſequences, that it ingages us oftener than is decent in the favourite *Diverſion*, untill we have attained the dexterity and the knowledge we deſire; it fills us with vexation if after all we do not ſucceed at it, and will be a temptation, ſhould we maſter it, to follow it too cloſe, and ſpend too much of our time at it, either that we may make a penny of our art, or out of ſilly vanity to let others ſee our extraordinary talent at it.

I proceed now in the *Third Place* to lay before you ſuch *Rules* and *Directions* as regard the *Uſe* and *Enjoyment* of your *Diverſions*.

1. Beg of God that he would preſide over your *Diverſions*; that he would fortify you by his *Grace* againſt the temptations that may aſſault you; teach you moderation in the uſe of them, and the wiſe art of making them ſubſervient to Religion; in a word, that he would add his bleſſing to them for the enlivening and refreſhing your ſpirits. I would not be thought to mean that ſuch a formal addreſs ought immediately to precede every *Diverſion*, though I ſee no harm in it if it did; but what I mean is, that in your private prayers among other petitions you would

would not omit to mention ſometimes the *Regulation of your Diverſions*, that as they are innocent in their nature, they may alſo prove innocent in their uſe. And there is no doubt but you will do this, if duely ſenſible of the need you ſtand in of the divine Preſence, that the moſt harmleſs food may kill where he does not mercifully prevent; or plainly that we cannot be concerned about the world, though in the moſt ſimple and unforbidden inſtances, with abſolute ſafety; there is nothing but the Devil may mingle his temptations with, and, when we dream of no danger near, convey poiſon into our cup of pleaſure; which ſhould be a reaſon with us to beg of God to direct and reſtrain us, to hedge round our way, and enable us to recreate ourſelves with innocence and ſafety.

11. Bleſs God your circumſtances in the world are ſuch as to allow of needful and moderate *Diverſions*; I ſay thoſe that are *needful*; for really to be in a condition that would lay us under a temptation to paſs away the whole of life in one inchanted circle or continued variation of them, is what no one would deſire that knows what makes for his true intereſt; as, on the other ſide, it is not the moſt happy ſtate of life to be confined to a perpetual drudgery of buſineſs juſt to ſupply the neceſſities of nature. If there be not an opportunity to unbend and relax

relax by intervals, and taſte the ſweets of life, we find in ourſelves a ſtrong inclination to repine, and are the more apt to exceed bounds whenever we injoy a vacancy. We have therefore great reaſon to be thankful if *Agur*'s wiſe choice be our lot, not to have either *Poverty* or *Riches*. Our Religion is no enemy to convenient Recreations; and if herein our condition agree with our Religion, and will admit of them too, it is indeed a mercy. While we chear and exhilarate ourſelves, and the ſprings of life have a new force and briſkneſs put into them, and our ſecret powers are diſpoſed to act with greater pleaſures, let not the goodneſs of our moſt bountiful Creator be unminded, who permits us to relieve our wearineſs, and ſupplies us with the means and capacities of doing it, and is pleaſed to ſee us lightened and animated by our Recreations, provided we do not tranſgreſs the inviolable rules of virtue and ſobriety.

III. In caſe you play for money, let the ſum be inconſiderable, and no more than you would contentedly loſe. Where the ſtakes run high, it is no longer a *Diverſion*, a calm and pleaſing amuſement, but endangers your repoſe. The whole ſoul is in an uneaſy ſuſpence while the game is depending, the thoughts variouſly agitated, and hope and fear by turns poſſeſs you; and thus what was deſigned to invigorate, tires and tor-

torments you, and diſpirits you to a greater degree than buſineſs itſelf would have done. Should you loſe, not to mention the vexation it will give you, you will ſcarce be able to forbear playing on to retrieve your loſs; though inſtead of that it often happens that you throw more after. Should you win, it only ſerves to draw you in further, makes you willing to double the ſtake; and lured with the flattering hope of bettering your *good luck*, as you call it, loſe perhaps twice the ſum you had gotten. In ſhort, win or loſe, the inconvenience is much the ſame, and either way you become addicted to gameing.

And to this cauſe I make no doubt, we ought to aſcribe that vehement paſſion for play that we ſee in certain perſons, who are never ſatisfied any longer than while they are at it, nor indeed then. They play the oftener becauſe they play for money, and by often playing they contract an habitual inclination that is continually importuning them. It cannot paſs for an excuſe, *that you have money to ſpare*; for it is a miſtake to think you have ſo very much to ſpare for idle *Diverſions*. Say you can ſpare what you play for at firſt, you are induced at long run to play for more than you can ſpare. Haſt thou bread and to ſpare? Be thankful to God for this overplus, and ſhew thine is real charity by feeding his poor. Does thy cup

over

overflow? It is pity any thing ſhould be waſted when there are ſo many would be glad of it to allay their thirſt. It is a dangerous error, though but too common, that what is more than enough to ſupply our needs, and the needs of thoſe nature has obliged us to provide for, is perfectly at our own diſpoſal, and may be laviſhed away at diſcretion; whereas indeed we are no more than God's *Treaſurers*, and muſt account for all that we receive; our ſuperfluous wealth is part of the Publick Stock, and we are guilty of great miſmanagement to embezzle it, and lay it out on our private occaſions; I would not ſay, when there is occaſion.

IV. Be very ſparing of your *Diverſions.* Though I ſaid, not long ſince, that there are ſome occaſions proper to relax in, you muſt not preſently fancy that whenever you feel a reluctance to work, and the mind is a little wandering and diſſipated, you have a ſufficient pretence to ſeek your cure in ſome *Diverſion*; for this backwardneſs does often ariſe not from your being unfit but unaccuſtomed to labour; and with a little trouble your thoughts might be recollected, and after you were once ſet in the work would proceed ſuccesfully enough. Beſides the barely changing our buſineſs, might be made many times to ſupply the place of *Diverſion*, and the mind weary and ſick of one ſet of thoughts would find its repoſe in another;

ther; the ſecret of this is, that it cannot bear to be long in company with the ſame object; you muſt feed it with variety if you would keep it from languiſhing. In this it reſembles the eye that loves not to gaze for any long while together upon the moſt beautiful picture, without once looking off; it is the liberty to vary its objects that gratifies it moſt. I believe there is ſcarce a *Studient* but can tell us from his own experience, that after having meditated himſelf into a dozy heartleſs frame, the reading a delightful piece of *Hiſtory* hath awakened him, and put him into a new vein for contemplation.

Real occaſions for *Diverſion* then are not ſo frequent as you are willing to believe, and conſequently your *Diverſions* ought not to be many and thick ſown. The multitude of *Diverſions* is extremely prejudicial, and the ſymptom of a vain and ſenſual diſpoſition. In a life full of theſe airy pleaſures what room is there for the mortification and ſelf denial of a Chriſtian? A too quick ſucceſſion of them ſenſualizes the heart, and unites it too ſtrongly to the world; it makes you over fond of life, and afraid of death; it weakens the influence of heavenly things; for how can it be that our aſpirations to the joys above ſhould be very ardent at the time we are ſo intirely poſſeſſed of worldly delights? It emaſculates the ſpirits; ſo ſoftens the mind that it ſinks under adverſity: it is by voluntary

tary auſterities a man hardens himſelf againſt the day of trouble, and is able to bear up againſt thoſe ſhocks of Providence from which no one is ſecure: whereas *Diverſions* too often repeated unbrace the nerves of the ſoul, and enfeeble its powers; and finally render us averſe to the ſeverer exerciſes of Religion and Virtue. Theſe are all natural conſequences of a life abandoned to Sports and Paſtimes, the ſerious thought of which ſhould make us ſober and reſerved in the uſe of them.

v. Let not your *Diverſions* be too long and entrench upon your precious time; as for certain they do when ſo much of the day is allotted them that you are forced to crowd together in haſte your *Devotions* and *Buſineſs*, that they may come within the compaſs of the little that is left; or perhaps, wholly neglect them. He is to be commended that knows when to leave off, who having ſtopped and breathed a while, and taken neceſſary refreſhment, purſues his journey with freſh vigour and alacrity, and does not, as ſome others, make a tedious ſtay at every baiting place.

Diverſions in life are not altogether unlike *Digreſſions* in a Book, things mighty ſerviceable to an *Author*, they relieve him in the want of matter, and which is yet better, ſwell the bulk and the price of his Book; neither, if diſcreetly huſbanded, are they

unacceptable to the Reader; but if ſpun out to an unreaſonable length, they take up much more room than the main ſubject; we conclude the *Author* to have a wrong idea of *Digreſſions*, or a very mean one of his Readers. The buſineſs of life, ſetting aſide the time that runs off in convenient ſleep and repoſe, ordinarily claims the bigeſt portion of the remainder; and in caſe your uſual *Diverſions* fill a larger ſpace they are monſtrous and unſizeable, as thoſe overgrown *Digreſſions* mentioned before. Time is a moſt valuable talent, and the more valuable in that Eternity depends on it, and you had beſt think a little how you will be able to anſwer it at the laſt day, ſhould you be prodigal of this treaſure, and ſquander it away in *needleſs Diverſions*, *Diverſions* that are loved not ſo much upon their own account (for their length is really tedious) as becauſe they ſerve to paſs away time.

VI. Let not your mind and heart be too far engaged in a *Diverſion*. To hug a *Diverſion* ſo cloſe argues the affection to be prepoſſeſſed more than is becoming, and is an indication of a light and frothy ſoul. An infallible ſign of this eager application to *Diverſion* is refuſing to leave it when ſome occaſional buſineſs ſummons you away; and as this is a ſign of a too intenſe purſuit of *Diverſion* ſo is it evidently a reaſon againſt it; for whatſoever tends not to make a *Diver-*

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ſion preparatory to buſineſs, but a let and a hinderance, muſt needs be an abuſe of it, and inconſiſtent with the laws of *Temperance*; much as if I ſhould uſe a remedy for a diſtemper, and take ſo great a doſe of it as to encreaſe my illneſs.

VII. Look not on *Diverſion* as an end, but uſe it as a means. Let *Diverſion* be for the ſake of *Buſineſs*, not *Buſineſs* miniſter to *Diverſion*; which I fear is the common method of the world, whoſe principal motive to work is either that they may get wherewith to ſupply their *Diverſions*, or that by variety they may give a poignancy and reliſh to them, or be able to divert themſelves without cenſure; theſe are the views that animate them, and make buſineſs ſupportable, not the thought that they are now doing their duty, obeying God, and ſerving their generation. On the contrary, in their uſe of Recreation they look no further, they reſt here as in their end, and the thing that chiefly indears it is the ſlight ſuperficial pleaſure it gives, not its fitneſs to revive them, and beget a new appetite and capacity for *Buſineſs*, that ſo they may glorify God by a virtuous induſtry. Should they deny this, they will never be believed, as long as they envy Perſons of *Quality* for the pleaſurable life they lead, and account them the happieſt people on earth becauſe they can be continually diverting themſelves,

and not have ſuch heavy reflections paſſed upon them, as they ſhould for taking the ſame liberties. What can be a plainer argument than this, that they take *Diverſion* to be the great end of life? A notion that is confuted by the very name; for a *Diverſion* is ſo called from its interrupting our principal concern; according to which etymology ſhould we ſuppoſe it our great happineſs to mind chiefly our *Diverſions*, (where our circumſtances allow of it) what we now term *Buſineſs* would moſt properly go under the name of *Diverſion*.

It is not impoſſible that *Young Gentlemen* (if any ſuch happen to read this ſmall Eſſay) when they look on this, and ſome of the foregoing Particulars, will paſs them over haſtily, without making any application to themſelves, fancying they are not the Perſons concerned. The frequency and length of *Diverſions*, and the not ſubordinating them to more manly and grave Occupations, may be a fault in thoſe of meaner quality, but in them they beſpeak a freedom and gallantry of ſpirit, and are a ſort of rights and immunities belonging to their great birth and fortune. If they muſt make conſcience how they ſpend their time, what advantage have they above others? What is a great Eſtate good for but to maintain the owner in a ſoft, idle and luxurious way of living? How elſe ſhall he diſtinguiſh himſelf from the trading part of the world?

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In earneſt, this is ſuch ſorry reaſoning that I am loath to ſuppoſe a man of any ſenſe capable of it. *A Gentleman*, I hope, does not reckon himſelf above the laws of right Reaſon and the commands of the Goſpel; he is equally a ſubject of God Almighty, every whit as accountable for his actions; and his time is a talent it concerns him to improve, no leſs than other men. Alas, Sirs, *Figure*, *Eſtate* and *Title* are poor empty things; thus much you learn from the example of our Lord who refuſed them all when in his power. Becauſe they dazzle a vain unthinking crowd, is it imaginable they ſhould weigh ſo much with the Great God, that he will exempt you from the common duties of human nature? Did our bleſſed Maſter lead a laborious and painful life? And can any that are called his diſciples think it beneath them to ſet to any thing that hath but the face of *Buſineſs*.

To aſk—How a *Gentleman* ſhall diſtinguiſh himſelf if not by his Pleaſures—is a ſcandalous queſtion; and might with as good grace be altered to this other queſtion—How he ſhall be diſtinguiſhed from other men but by being leſs *Reaſonable* than they—If he muſt be differenced from the reſt of the world, there are much more creditable methods for it than this that is commonly taken. Let him affect to lead the way in brave and virtuous actions, and to excel in uſeful learn-

ing, for which laſt he hath manifeſtly the advantage of perſons whoſe circumſtances are narrower; ſuch accompliſhments will brighten his character, and becauſe of the eminence of his ſtation appear ſooner, and dart their light and influence further than it is poſſible they ſhould in a lower ſphere. For a man to plead his Eſtate as his *Patent* for being careleſs and negligent, is ſuch a piece of *effrontery* that nothing can be more. Let the *Servant* he pays the greateſt wages to, alledge that for a reaſon of his gading abroad, and doing leſs than his fellows; what anſwer muſt he expect? *Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur.*

Haſt thou ſo much of the world that thou doſt not know of any uſe for it, unleſs it be to furniſh thy Pleaſures? Let not this long diſturb thee; thy wealth is not ſo unweildy, but there are enough who would willingly take off the parings of it; the *poor* and the *needy* are always with you. I would fain believe no *Young Gentleman*, to excuſe his uſeleſs unprofitable manner of life, will pretend, he is at a loſs how to imploy himſelf, that his time lies upon his hands, and he had as good give it all to Recreation, as conſume it in doing nothing. Should any one talk at this rate, he muſt ſtrangely forget himſelf; for where is the conſequence, that becauſe he would avoid doing nothing, he is forced

forced upon doing that which is to no purpoſe?

The firſt Years of a *Gentleman*'s life (after his Reaſon begins to diſplay itſelf) are uſually ſpent at the Publick Schools, and there he cannot want for *Buſineſs* to take him up. Let him get into the acquaintance of the beſt Authors, and by them labour continually in cultivating his mind and manners, and he will find the fragments of time that remain over and above are not ſo very conſiderable. But, ah, how ſeldom is this done! Young men that are born to Eſtates miſerably neglect their Studies; as if learning looked too pedantic in a *Gentleman*, or as if they ſhould ſuck in enough of it by only breathing in the *College Air*; though I dare ſay they would never conſent their dear bodies ſhould be put off with ſuch thin diet. Hence proceeds an ignorance that has been the ſcandal of ſo many of our *Gentry*, and has made it wiſhed they would never travel to give Foreigners ſo poor an idea of the ſenſe and learning of the Engliſh Nation. And doubtleſs this ignorance is a principal reaſon of the corruption of the preſent age, more particularly of the vices of the tongue. *Gentlemen* would fain be remarkable for ſomething, and deſpairing to paſs for men of ſober and ſolid ſenſe, ſet up for *Men of Wit*, that is, for men that can make a jeſt of *Damnation*; for in truth, he alone is thought *a Witty Man* that can ſay

extravigant things, and treat his *Maker* with the ſame coarſeneſs and freedom that he would his *Footman.* Yea, ſo faſhionable is the profane humour grown, that (God forgives us) it is almoſt become a *Set Diverſion*; a *Diverſion* I confeſs I did not mention in diſcourſing of the *Choice of Diverſions*, becauſe ſo very bad that every one muſt ſee the evil of it; ſo very bad indeed that the Devil himſelf cannot invent a worſe. In ſhort, (that I may return from this little digreſſion) *Young Gentlemen* will find enough to do to lay in materials, that they may appear with honour and reputation when their *King* or *Country* ſhall call them into the ſcene of action.

VIII. Learn humility from your *Diverſions.* The want of them is not, in all likelihood, a neceſſity of original nature, but the effect of ſin. Innocent man was not liable to that ſtupor and ſatiety we ſo often experience; his work, properly ſpeaking, was not labour but pleaſure; his ſtrength could carry him on to his end without reſting ſo often by the way; and whatever faintneſs and laſſitude he might at times fall into, muſt, I fancy, have been inconſiderable, and ſoon remedied by a ſhort balſamic ſleep. From hence it is, I am inclined to think, that part of the *Curſe*, [d] *In the ſweat of thy face ſhalt thou eat bread untill thou return to the*

[d] Gen. iii. 19.

the ground, was not only remote, and fell immediately upon the earth, which being doomed to barrenneſs would put man to more expence and trouble to cultivate and improve it, but reſpected man immediately, and was as much as to ſay, that he ſhould not only be obliged to beſtow more care and labour upon the ground, but his work of that and all other kinds ſhould be more painful and toilſome, and call for more frequent *Diverſions*. But however this be, it is out of doubt that our *Diverſions* are marks, if not of our *apoſtacy*, at leaſt of the *imperfection* of the preſent ſtate; for is it ſuppoſable that the *ſpirits of juſt men made perfect* are as we preſently oppreſſed by a contemplation, and for the ſake of change can find their pleaſure in *Play Games?* You will ſay they are at liberty from the load of *fleſh* and *blood* that weighs us down. Very true; but how do you apprehend it will be at the reſurrection when the ſoul ſhall be again inveſted with its body? Shall we then need to trifle ſometimes that we may work at others? No certainly; the ſpritelineſs and ſtrength of both parts of our nature will fit us for continual exerciſe, and, being equal to the angels, we ſhall not be ſubject to that weakneſs, and to thoſe infirmities that belong to our preſent infant ſtate.

Methinks therefore we cannot make a better nor more natural uſe of our *Diverſions* than to draw from them an argument for

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humility. And if this be the true uſe, aſſuredly they make a very wrong one of them, whoſe *Diverſions* are a reaſon of their pride; they deſpiſe the man that maintains himſelf by an honeſt induſtry, and hath not the ability or the inclination to melt down his hours in fooliſh pleaſures. But what cannot pride effect? It can build in the air, or upon that very ground that is ſacred to humility; and ſo great is the intereſt it has got in man, that he takes occaſion to be proud from thoſe things that are the effects of ſin and ought to humble him. *Nakedneſs*, as I may ſay, was the livery of innocence; cloaths had not been known but by the *Fall*; and every time we dreſs ourſelves it is ſtrange almoſt how we can forbear reflecting by that very action, that we are *apoſtate* creatures: and yet what hath miniſtered more to vanity than cloaths? I have likewiſe ſhown you that the neceſſity of Recreations was introduced by the *Fall*; for men therefore to inſult becauſe they divert themſelves even more than is needful, betrays a ſtrong inclination to pride, and (abſtracting from other conſiderations) renders the *Moſaic Hiſtory* extremely probable, which acquaints us that our nature was tainted with this ſin in the fountain.

To add the greater force and efficacy to the *Directions* that have been given, conſider the advantages of *Regularity*. I glanced

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at ſeveral as I paſſed along, but it will not be amiſs to conſider more diſtinctly,

1. The agreeable appearance that it makes. Proportion is the very eſſence of beauty and harmony. The beauty of a body lies in the ſtrict ſymmetry of its parts, and a fine air and colour ſpread over the whole; and the beauty of human life conſiſts in a due proportion and correſpondence of the ſeveral parts with one another, and of all together with the law of right Reaſon. Where the ſhrill and airy, and the more ſolemn ſounds do jointly aſſiſt to the harmony, the muſick fails not to pleaſe a diſcerning ear; when the lights and the ſhades in a picture are judiciouſly mingled, the eye confeſſes itſelf charmed at the ſight; and who is there that is not agreeably ſurprized to ſee in a *youthful life* the brighter and the graver ſcenes orderly placed, and managed by an exact prudence?

11. Reflect on the credit that attends good management in *Diverſions.* A temperance that reſtrains from the groſſer inſtances of ſenſual pleaſure is not without its praiſe in a *Young Man*, becauſe the contrary is ſo very common in our times, and the fever of Youth does ſeem a little to excuſe thoſe extravagant ſallies; how reputable then muſt be a temperence that deſcends even to the inſpection and government of his Recreations? It ſhows his Reaſon to be ſtanch and firm, that there is a principle within him ſuperior

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to ſenſe and fancy, which hath the maſtery of his deſires, and can be cool and ſedate amidſt warm and clamorous paſſions; it beſpeaks preſent applauſe, and incourages great hopes and expectations of the future. The *Gentleman* that has prefered his private *Buſineſs* to his *Diverſions* may with the greater confidence, be entruſted with publick Affairs by his *Prince* or *Country*, ſecure that he will not neglect them for his pleaſures. The *Scholar* that hath ſtuck cloſe to his Studies will be reckoned well furniſhed and prepared for the imployment he engages in. And the *Tradſeman* who has minded his Shop will be thought to be maſter of his Trade; the world will judge him in a fair way to thrive, and ſo if he wants a ſtock to begin with he ſhall have credit enough almoſt to ſupply it. In a word all of them, with this *Proviſo*, enter upon the world with peculiar advantages.

III. The Pleaſure of well regulated *Diverſions* ought not to be forgotten. Whatever is reaſonable will always carry with it its own reward, for Reaſon is the proper nature of man, his great diſtinctive character; and the more natural any thing the more pleaſant. The temperate perſon feels a more ſerene and genuine pleaſure both in the *enjoyment* and in the *reflection*.

1. Temperance gives the ſincereſt pleaſure in the *enjoyment* of *Diverſions*; of which there

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are theſe two or three obvious Reaſons to be aſſigned.

1. Their not being too common, nor lengthened out too far, makes them the more reliſhing. It may be remarked of all the delights of this world that they pall upon a long fruition, and, if often repeated, grow flat and taſteleſs; it is *abſence* muſt recommend the moſt ingenious converſation; and two of the beſt friends that ever lived, after they have been ſhut up in a room for ſeveral hours, (unleſs they have ſomething extraordinary to talk of) will, for the time, be heartily ſick of one anothers company. On this very account I have ſometimes wondered how ſo many people can bear a conſtant *round* of long-winded *Diverſions*; it cannot be, ſure, from the mighty pleaſure they find in them; I am perſuaded they enjoy leſs of that than other men. Monſieur *Paſcal* will tell you the true ground of this— "In all the tumultuary buſineſs, and in all "the trifling Diverſions amongſt men, our "general aim is to make the time paſs off "our hands without feeling it, or rather "without feeling ourſelves; and by getting "rid of this ſmall portion of life, to avoid "that inward diſguſt and bitterneſs which "we ſhould not fail to meet with, did we "find the leiſure to deſcend into our own "breaſts."

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2. The temperate man injoys all the pleaſure a *Diverſion* will naturally afford, becauſe he does not look for more; whereas diſappointment is the certain fate of very poſitive deſires, and fruition gives but little ſatisfaction, in regard fancy had promiſed too much; the man is diſguſted to find all his gay hopes ſo rudely treated, and himſelf the *Cully* of his *imagination*. It is advantageous for an object when expectation falls ſhort of it, nor is any one diſpleaſed to be ſo miſtaken, becauſe the error contributes to his happineſs; but when expectation flies too high it is a mortification to deſcend again, as it would be for a gueſt that had ſeated himſelf at the upper end of the table to be thruſt down amongſt the meaneſt of the company.

3. Temperance is the reaſon that a perſon diverts himſelf with an eaſy ſatisfied mind. Having paid what he owes to his more important concerns, his thoughts within are at reſt, he may now venture upon a little harmleſs pleaſure, and has the leave of God and his conſcience for it. Not ſo he whoſe *Diverſions* joſtle out the main affairs of life; being ſent into the world not that he might follow the conduct of humour and fancy, but to ſerve his Maker and be uſeful to mankind; he muſt needs be uneaſy for having acted beneath the dignity of his nature, and the deſign of his creation; his conſcience will be apt to tell him he hath no right

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to *Diverſions*; it will upbraid him for having ſtolen ſo much time from his *Buſineſs*, and be continually duning him for the long arrears that are due. And thus the pleaſure the firſt takes in a *Diverſion* drinks pure and refined, like a liquor drawn off from its lees; that of the other is extremely puddled, as liquor when the veſſel hath received a great ſhake, and the dregs at bottom are diſturbed and unſettled. To conclude.

11. If the regular perſon has the better in the *enjoyment* of *Diverſions*, much more in the *reflection*. Memory is not a torment to him as it is to ſome others who have reaſon to bluſh every time they caſt their view backward, not ſeeing any but empty ſpace void of all ſubſtantial actions, nor having advanced in the knowledge of God, of the world, or of themſelves; to whom no ſtanding memorial is left that a rational Being hath lived, but only a few ideas ſilly and impertinent as the images of a dream.

In ſhort, if a life poſſeſſed intirely by *Diverſions* be pleaſing to think on, it muſt be when it is yet future, not when it is paſt. On the contrary, time well ſpent yields greater ſatisfaction in the reflection than it does in the proſpect; by being paſt it is ſecured to a perſon, and no accident whatever can alter it, whereas there is ſomething of contingency while it is to come, and many temptations may turn him from his duty; beſides

beſides he reaps the fruits of his good huſbandry, he finds his very Being bettered and improved, and more valuable than it was; to which add, that his chearful labours and his innocent mirth encourage him to hope for the happineſs of a better life.

The End of the SECOND VOLUME.

To be corrected.

PAGE 36. l. 23. r. of the. p. 43. l. 28. r. a virtue. p. 481. l. 31. r. Diverſions.